

Church Reader

for Lent

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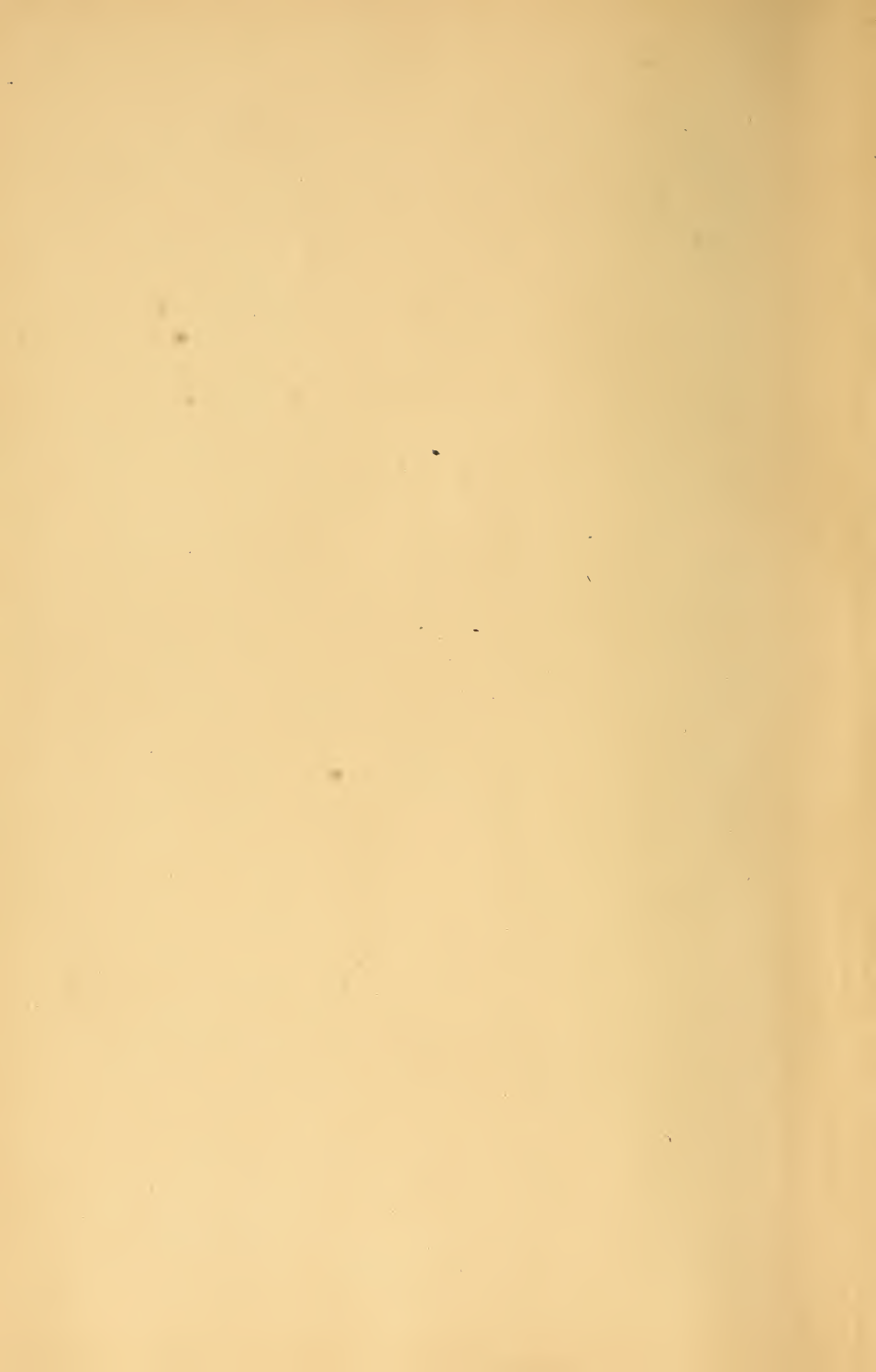
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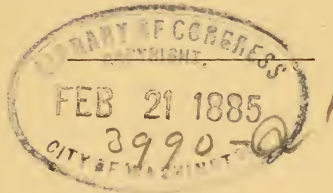


CHURCH READER

For Lent.

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

original
THE REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.



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MR. THOMAS WHITTAKER.

Dear Sir,—During the Lenten season, many of our clergy are so occupied that they find little time for preparing sermons. Desiring to be of some service to them, I have taken your suggestion, and compiled this volume. The sermons are chiefly condensations; some have been shortened by discarding whole paragraphs; and others are mere extracts from long discourses. They will average only about ten minutes in delivery. If they should aid any of my younger brethren, relieve the pressure of an over-burdened brain, or furnish a crumb of daily bread to some hungry soul in private, I shall be thankful and happy.

Yours in Christ,

J. CROSS.

66 WEST 38TH STREET, NEW YORK,
Advent-tide, 1884.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. TRUE CONVERSION	<i>Cross</i> . . . 1
II. BENEDICITE	<i>Grimley</i> . . . 8
III. EFFECTUAL REPENTANCE	<i>Cross</i> . . . 16
IV. THE HAUNTING SPECTRE	<i>Buxton</i> . . . 23
V. TEMPTATION	<i>Buxton</i> . . . 28
VI. LENT IN NINEVEH	<i>Cross</i> . . . 33
VII. THE SLEEP OF SIN	<i>Grimley</i> . . . 42
VIII. REST NOT HERE	<i>Cross</i> . . . 49
IX. THE WATCHMAN'S WARNING	<i>Buxton</i> . . . 53
X. FRUIT OF THE RIGHTEOUS	<i>Cross</i> . . . 57
XI. SELF-SUBJECTION	<i>Grimley</i> . . . 65
XII. LEAVEN OF THE KINGDOM	<i>Cross</i> . . . 71
XIII. THE PURIFYING HOPE	<i>Maclaren</i> . . . 81
XIV. THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN	<i>Grimley</i> . . . 85
XV. DRAWING NEAR TO GOD	<i>Cross</i> . . . 90
XVI. "THE BRIDAL OF THE EARTH AND SKY"	<i>Maclaren</i> . . . 95
XVII. KEEPING THE HEART	<i>Cross</i> . . . 101
XVIII. MAN'S TRUE TREASURE IN GOD	<i>Maclaren</i> . . . 104
XIX. PURSUIT OF CHARITY	<i>Cross</i> . . . 112
XX. HUMANITARIANISM AND CHRISTIANITY	<i>Grimley</i> . . . 118
XXI. PERMANENCE OF LOVE	<i>Lipscomb</i> . . . 127
XXII. SOJOURNING WITH GOD	<i>Cross</i> . . . 135
XXIII. CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE	<i>Ewer</i> . . . 143

	PAGE
XXIV. THE CARNAL MIND	<i>Parker</i> . . 147
XXV. NOTHING BUT LEAVES	<i>Buxton</i> . . 154
XXVI. MISERICORDIA	<i>Cross</i> . . . 159
XXVII. THE WOMAN AT THE WELL	<i>Grimley</i> . . 164
XXVIII. MARVELS OF MERCY	<i>Cross</i> . . . 174
XXIX. THE HIDDEN LIFE	<i>Grimley</i> . . 179
XXX. SIN IMMEASURABLY REMOVED	<i>Cross</i> . . . 186
XXXI. JUSTIFICATION	<i>Faber</i> . . . 191
XXXII. GOD'S FATHERLY COMPASSION	<i>Cross</i> . . . 194
XXXIII. CONTENTMENT	<i>Buxton</i> . . 199
XXXIV. THE TWO MITES	<i>Grimley</i> . . 204
XXXV. CONVICTION OF SIN	<i>Buxton</i> . . 208
XXXVI. MARRIAGE AT CANA	<i>Grimley</i> . . 212
XXXVII. PENITENTIAL CONFESSION	<i>Buxton</i> . . 220
XXXVIII. DIVES AND HIS BRETHREN	<i>Grimley</i> . . 224
XXXIX. CHRIST'S NEW COMMANDMENT	<i>Parker</i> . . 231
XL. REDEEMING GRACE	<i>Cross</i> . . . 237
XLI. SYMPATHY, HUMAN AND DIVINE	<i>Grimley</i> . . 242
XLII. FÉNELON'S PRAYER	<i>Ewer</i> . . . 249
XLIII. GOD'S LOVE TO MAN	<i>Faber</i> . . . 254
XLIV. THE MYSTERIOUS AGONY	<i>Cross</i> . . . 258
XLV. THE GREAT SACRIFICE	<i>Cross</i> . . . 267
XLVI. THE CRUCIFIXION	<i>Buxton</i> . . 272
XLVII. THE GARDEN GRAVE	<i>Buxton</i> . . 280

CHURCH READER FOR LENT.

I.

Ash Wednesday.

TRUE CONVERSION.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

Turn ye even to me with all the heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. — *Joel* ii. 12.

AGAIN the annual penitential season is upon us. Again the Church assumes her sackcloth, and sprinkles her locks with ashes, and calls her children to humiliation, repentance and prayer. The institution is doubtless of apostolic origin, as many of the early Fathers attest; and the chief Christian authorities of the first three centuries uniformly recognize its existence as an observance of their times. In the year of our Lord 325, the Council of Nicæa fixed the period of the fast at forty days, and that has been the term of its duration annually down to the present day. If Scripture precedent be demanded, it is sufficient to cite the example of Moses, who twice fasted forty days in Mount Sinai; and of Elijah, who six centu-

ries later kept a fast of the same length in the same locality ; and of the king of Nineveh and his people, whose fast of forty days turned away from the guilty metropolis the threatened wrath of Heaven ; and, above all, of our divine Master and Pattern, who, preparatory to his Messianic ministry, fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness of Judæa. And surely we of to-day need such chastening of our sinful nature, such salutary check upon our sinful passions and habits ; and what could be more reasonable than that we should once a year thus humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God ? Let us listen, therefore, to the divine summons in the first words of the prophetic message appointed for the Ash-Wednesday Epistle : “ Turn ye even to me with all the heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.”

Here is true conversion ; a turning of the mind, the will, the affections, the whole inner man, to God ; involving a change of heart, a change of habit, a change of character, a change of masters and moral relations, such a change as may well be called a putting-off of the old man and a putting-on of the new. In Scripture representation, it is the lost treasure found, the lost sheep restored, the lost son returned, the exile recalled from banishment, the captive released from servitude, the prisoner emerging from his dungeon, the rebel subdued and reconciled, the convict pardoned and promoted, the blind eye opened to the blessed daylight, the sleeper hearing the call and awaking to duty, the dead thrilling to the

quicken voice of Christ, and coming forth from his grave.

True religion enlists all the faculties and affections of our spiritual nature. It requires the whole inner man, intellectual, emotional, and moral. Without a painful consciousness of sin, an ingenuous confession of sin, a profound shame and sorrow for sin, an intense hatred and entire renunciation of sin, an honest purpose to lead a new and better life, an earnest spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice, with frequent and fervent prayer for grace to bring all this to good effect, with cordial acquiescence in the divine will and joyful acceptance of the divine mercy, every attempt at conversion will be an utter failure. Outward amendment there may be, we all know, without any corresponding change within. A person may cease sinning because temptation or opportunity has ceased, or because present circumstances are unfavorable to the accustomed indulgence, or because he fears the social consequences or the public infamy likely to ensue. But will you call this conversion, when you relinquish your sins with regret, and give your services to God as you would give your purse to the highwayman? If you yield to God's requirement from force or fear, what is it but the unwilling service of a trembling slave? Will God accept such a service, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant"? Nay, he demands the free-will offering of filial love; he delights in the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. No heart in it, your religion is all an outside show, the shell without the kernel, the vessel with-

out the wine, the casket without the gem, the body without the soul. Unreal, it is unproductive ; like the tree in the picture, bearing no fruit. Whatever of beauty it may have is evanescent as the rainbow, which fades away while we gaze upon it. It is a character enacted upon the stage, and ending with the play.

In religion, as in the world, the best things are oftenest counterfeited. As gold, silver, diamonds, and costly apparel, are frequently substituted by base and worthless imitations ; so are penitence, piety, holiness, and true worship, by the vilest arts and inventions of hypocrisy. If you knew you were dealing with a cunning cheat, you would be on your guard against his knavish artifices ; but you have to deal with three grand cheats, leagued for your deception and overthrow — Satan, the father of lies ; the world, a hollow show, a gilded sham, a fascinating mockery ; and your own heart, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, beyond all human knowledge. Will you trust them ? Better trust the wind, the wave, the quicksand, the volcano. King Saul wept, confessed his sin, and swore an oath of amity to David ; but David knew that heartless tongue too well to place any confidence in its utterances, even when attended by tears ; and “ Saul went home, but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.” Herod listened to John with reverence ; but, at the instigation of a wicked woman, he cut off the prophet’s head. The publican of the parable uttered a sincere confession ; the sinful woman shed true tears over her Saviour’s feet ; and when the Master in the high-priest’s hall turned and looked upon the disciple that

denied him, "Peter went out and wept bitterly," and tradition says he never afterward heard a cock crow without a renewal of his tears.

And let us remember how all Israel wept at Mizpah, fasting, confessing their sins, putting away Baal and Ash-taroth, turning unto the Lord with all their heart, and pouring out water before him, symbolical of the pouring-out of their sins, their confessions, and their penitential prayers. Observe, it was not the pouring-out of oil, which leaves the vessel foul ; nor of wine, which leaves its odor behind ; nor of coin or gems, which might easily be gathered up again ; but of water, which leaves neither stain nor smell, and cannot be recovered. So let us pour out our sins before God, with humble confessions, and fervent supplications, and penitential tears. Let us turn even unto him with all the heart ; lay our best faculties and affections at his feet ; cast ourselves, soul and body, a living sacrifice, upon his altar. Surely, the end is worth the endeavor ; and no effort should be deemed too arduous, no agony too intense, no self-denial too painful, by which we may lay hold on eternal life. Hither, then, let us bring all the energies of a redeemed and immortal nature, and toil as the sailor does in the tempest, and strive as the soldier does in the battle, and struggle as the wrestler does in the arena, and apply ourselves to the great enterprise of the soul's salvation as the student does to his books, the merchant to his traffic, and every artisan to his calling, still looking for help to Him whose strength is made perfect in our weakness, and whose grace is sufficient for all human necessities. Then our labor shall

not be vain in the Lord, and this will prove to us the happiest Lent we ever saw, and the blessed Easter morning will find us in full sympathy with the victorious Captain of our salvation — “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

What is your Lenten programme? How do you purpose spending this sacred season? In fasting, weeping, and mourning, for your sins? Surely, we all have need of such penitential discipline. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Come to Gethsemane, and see the agony of Jesus! Whose burden is it that crushes him to the earth, bleeding at every pore? Whose bitter cup is it, from which his sinless humanity recoils, but from which he cannot be excused? It is yours and mine. He suffers, the just for the unjust, that he may bring us to God. In the depth of his woe we see the turpitude of our transgressions. He is wrestling with our fearful retribution, to turn away from our guilty heads the wrath and ruin we deserve. See! the traitor comes, with a band of soldiers; they arrest him; they drag him to judgment; they scourge him to the cross. Let us follow, and see this great sight, at which the earth shudders, and the heavens array themselves with sackcloth. With this scene of unparalleled horror and anguish have we nothing to do? Is it Judas only, and Pilate, and Herod, and the high priest, and the false witnesses, and the bloodthirsty populace, and the cruel mercenary soldiers, who are chargeable with this fearful infliction?

“ ’Tis I, alas ! have done the deed !
’Tis I his sacred flesh have torn !
My sins have caused thee, Lord, to bleed,
Pointed the nail, and fixed the thorn ! ”

And shall we show any mercy to the sins which showed no mercy to the Sinless? Shall we spare the sins that would not spare the Saviour? Oh, let us search them out, and scourge them forth, and drive them back to hell ! And if they will not leave us, let us starve them with fasting, and drown them with weeping, and scorch them with fires of holiness ! Who can endure their vileness, tolerate their malignity, or harbor the fiends any longer in his heart?

But what say I? These fiends are our own voluntary actions, our own indulged and cherished passions. It is our own evil nature we must deny, our own guilty habits we must discard, the devil enthroned within us we must hurl from his usurped dominion. Now for the struggle, now for the conflict, in the strength of the Lord of hosts ! Let the strong man armed tremble at the advent of the Stronger ! Courage, ye feeble and faint-hearted ! The Church, with her services and sacraments, comes to your aid like an army with banners. Seize your gracious opportunity, and He that hath loved you shall make you more than conquerors ! Who is ashamed to follow Christ, and fast while others feast? Who fears the charge of formalism, or dreads the stigma of superstition? Who cares for the judgment of the heartless slaves of sin and brainless dupes of Satan, whose god is the flesh, whose altar the table, whose worship self-indulgence, whose re-

ward the everlasting fire? Has not the world's standard always been wrong, and have not God's elect always been a peculiar people? Take upon you the yoke of Christ, and follow him bearing your cross. Seize every means and method of self-discipline. Life is fleeting, eternity is at hand, and you have an infinite work to do before you are ready to meet your Judge! Hear once more the merciful summons, which after a little time shall never be heard again, save in the bitter mockeries of memory that haunt the reprobate soul forever—"Turn ye even to me with all the heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning!"

II.

Second Day of Lent.

BENEDICITE.

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, A.M.

O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.—*Song of The Three Children.*

THESE, my friends, are the opening words of the Song of the Three Children, or of the Three Youths, which, at this season of the Church's year, it is customary for us to sing instead of the Te Deum. The three youths, or the three children as they are called in old English style, are the three who are spoken of in the Book of Daniel as

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and in the Song itself as Ananias, Azarias, and Misael. You are familiar with their story, — how they refused to be unfaithful to the one true God, refused to worship the gods of the King Nebuchadnezzar, and to bow down to the golden image he had set up ; how, therefore, they were cast into the fiery furnace ; how they were wondrously preserved from death ; how they sang the song which is now called after them, as a thanksgiving song to the Lord who had delivered them from the fiery peril.

Note, first of all, that they were thrown into the fiery furnace for a sublime act of disobedience to an earthly king. He had bidden them worship gods which they knew were but the created things of the great God of heaven. He had bidden them worship things which they knew were not to be bowed down to : they were but the works of the Lord. They refused, therefore, to bend the knee in worship either to the golden image, the work of men's hands, or to the created things in earth, or sky, or sea, which the Babylonian king bade them revere as gods. But while they so refused to worship the things which were but the works of the Lord, the very first thought which found utterance upon their lips, when they gave thanks to God for so marvellously delivering them from the torture and deadly peril of fire, was an acknowledgment that the things they were bidden to worship did in truth themselves utter a strain of joy, did themselves offer up a worship of praise to the Lord, — “ O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.”

It must be admitted that these words, and words of

like import abounding in the Psalms and other poetical writings of the Bible, are looked upon by many as difficult words to make use of. The poetical form into which the thought is thrown is overlooked. In reading and in interpreting all poetry, the mind must be in a state receptive of exalted thoughts; it must rise above prosaic literality. Under the influence of an enkindled imagination, — and remember that imagination is the power of picturing within us things invisible to the bodily eyes, — under the influence of an enkindled imagination, language takes a form different from that in which we give expression to our common needs, or to the statement of the results of our ordinary observation. The form taken is very frequently that of invocation of inanimate objects, invocation of abstract ideas, invocation of departed heroes. For any one to suppose that the speaker entertains the thought that the rocks he calls upon can hear his voice, or do other than send back the echo of his spoken words; or that truth when solemnly appealed to is thought of as listening with an attentive ear; or that every one who invokes the shade of a departed worthy, believes that the words will reach the dweller in spirit-land, — for any one thus to bring ordinary prosaic thoughts into juxtaposition with the thoughts of a mind touched to its inmost depths and roused to noble longings, would be deemed to be linking the sublime to the ludicrous, to be giving a mock dignity to the mean by raising it to a level with the noble.

Mistakes of this sort are often made by well-meaning objectors to the use of poetical language in our religious

worship. Many there are who have their misgivings as to the use of the *Benedicite*, — misgivings which arise from failing to look upon the glorious song as expressed in the language of religious poetry. To allay such misgivings, it is as well that we who use the words — and who rejoice in them as we use them — should not shrink from declaring that in addressing the clouds, and the seas and floods, and the frost and cold, we do so without any consciousness that there is any listening spirit in the clouds, or in the waters, or in the frosty air, by whom our words are accepted as words of adoration and reverence ; but that we use them in the sense in which the Psalmist of old used many kindred expressions, — that we use them to express our overwhelming conviction, or to impress more deeply upon our minds the thought, that the heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament shows forth his handiwork ; that all things praise the Lord by fulfilling the purposes for which they were designed by him, and by revealing to us his wisdom and love.

Another objection to language such as the Psalmist so often uses, and which is repeated so exultantly by the three youths in their song of praise, is based upon the idea of the natural vileness of all created things ; upon the idea that a withering curse was uttered by God over all his handiwork, and that no swelling chorus of praise can be upraised, or conceived of as being upraised, from that which in God's sight teems with corruption. Such an idea had its birth in the morbid imagination of ascetic men who fancied they read in the Bible confirmation of

their own degraded estimate of the vileness of all material things. The idea still finds a home in the thoughts of men, more particularly of those who have an overstrained notion of the innate vileness of human nature, — a vileness so peculiar that they conceive of it as being capable of being dispelled, not by any organic inward change resulting from the silent growing into union with the Divine Spirit, but by having ascribed to it a righteousness to which it has ever been a stranger. The old devisers of the idea of the utter vileness of matter, and the modern exaggerators of the vileness of human nature, have both agreed in shutting their ears to the voice of praise proceeding from every thing that hath breath, and to the proclamation of the divine glory from all created things. Both have failed to read, in the story of the fall of man, the lesson that the only thing in the world which can destroy the beauty of God's works is sin ; that to the sin-dimmed eyes of men, the fairest garden is a wilderness ; that when sin is cherished in the heart, and practised in the life, the world which discloses only revelations of beauty and grandeur to pure and loving souls, has its glory veiled, and seems to have thrown across it the dark shadow of death.

The great verity which all who are so reluctant to take upon their lips the words of the *Benedicite* are struggling to grasp, and of which they have such imperfect hold, is this : that the strain of joy and praise to the Lord of all, from his works, cannot be heard in hearts where sin has gained a complete mastery ; cannot be heard where there is no moral harmony in the life, where there are no

thoughts already vibrating tunefully with the melody of a redeemed and thankful soul.

In stating the errors into which it may seem to us that our brethren in past or present times have fallen, we should always endeavor to recognize how the errors themselves are but imperfect presentations of truths.

But the whole subject which this wonderful song brings before our consideration is one of deep mystery ; is one which we cannot fully fathom ; is one concerning which we may ourselves easily err, and as to which we must be content to patiently wait for fuller light to dawn upon us. There is one utterance of the Apostle Paul, which, if we allow it to fasten itself upon our memory, — if we quietly ponder over it, and think of it in connection with that fuller revelation of knowledge which the hopes of immortality within us assure us will be granted to us in the spiritual home which this our earthly home is a preparation for, — may yield us some insight into the mystery which in all its fulness surpasses our understanding. The words are these : “The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.” So that, when we look upon the outward world, we are really beholding what God has designed to be for us a representation of the inner world of spirit. He has constituted the visible to be to us the silent teacher of the invisible, to declare to us his divine glory. The things we see are so designed as to prepare the human heart for the contemplation of the things unseen, to which they in mystic manner correspond. There is not a created thing on earth which has not its arche-

type in the heavens. Nothing we see in valley or on mountain, in the blue vault above, among the moving clouds, in storm or in sunshine, or on the great and wide sea, but has its divine pattern in the heavenly mount. The whole round world is all aglow with the teaching impressed upon it by the word of the Lord. A consecration rests upon it. The human spirit, reverently beholding the works of the Lord, sees in them all a sacramental token of a Divine Presence within them and around them. The very grass which withereth, the very flower which fadeth, have, in their fleeting existence, an outflow from, and a revelation of, the word of the Lord which endureth forever. And so to us the natural world around us has a ministerial mission. All things fulfil the Lord's word. All are servants of his, which do his pleasure. He himself in his own divine teaching, as he lived on earth, used them as such. The grass of the field, the birds of the air, the signs of the sky, — to all these he referred to illustrate the laws of the kingdom of heaven. In this morning's second lesson, we listened to him as he drew lessons regarding the growth of the human soul in divine love and wisdom, from the mysterious growth of seed scattered over the ground by the sower who went forth to do his work. All true knowledge is of slow and silent growth. The eye of man cannot estimate the advances made by any lowly soul striving to do the Lord's will, and opening itself to the Lord's teaching, any more than the most watchful eye can discern the slow changes which are undergone before the unquickened seed becomes the ripened corn; but,

just as all such changes are patiently watched over by the unwearied eye of the Lord, so does he also patiently guide the human soul in its upgrowth in knowledge of things divine, in its ripening towards that full fruition which is accomplished only in the unseen world.

As we ourselves most worthily praise the Lord by doing his will, and by opening our hearts to his loving inspiration, so we can understand how the devout servants of the Lord in days that are past, recognizing that his will was done by all created things, spoke of those things as offering up perpetual praise to their great Creator. They praised him by doing his will, by obeying his laws, by fulfilling the end for which they were created. Reverent souls even in Pagan times discerned the same mystic truth, which they embodied in an expression which has been handed down to us, — the music of the spheres; the music of an unceasing obedience to divine law; the harmony of working together for good.

But, if we are to be fully conscious of this heavenly harmony among the works of the Lord, there must be harmony within ourselves. We ourselves must be living in obedience to the will of the Lord, to his holy law. The law of self must not reign within us. Our whole life must be consecrated to God.

Oh, let us ever seek God's aid to enable us to live in accordance with his will! Let us see even in the mystery which environs his works, — those works whose laws we so dimly comprehend, — an assurance of the immortality that awaits us. We cannot here uplift the veil of mystery which surrounds the works of the Lord; we can at best

but listen to their chorus of praise : but one of the joys of the future life will be, we may be very sure, to enter more fully into that knowledge which is only partially revealed to us here, — the knowledge of the mystery of the world, which is but part and parcel of the knowledge of God. Oh, let us ever strive to grow in divine knowledge here, so as to make ourselves sure of growth yonder, and of a union with the Divine which shall know no ending !

III.

Third Day of Lent.

EFFECTUAL REPENTANCE.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of. —
1 COR. vi. 10.

THE genuine penitent is he who renounces all his sins, and would rather die than repeat them. And though all real penitence has not the same degree of intensity nor the same mode of expression, which must vary with natural temperament and circumstances, yet is it not godly sorrow, unless it involve such a sense of guilt, and such a horror and hatred of sin, and such a desire to escape from it into the condition of a better life, as shall work up the spirit of a man to such a pitch of solicitude and

trouble as perchance may never have been occasioned by any personal affliction, or any domestic bereavement, or any crisis in his earthly fortunes. And these feelings, if not expressed in sighs, and groans, and tears, and loud complaints, and bitter lamentations, will express themselves in watchings and strivings against the hated evil, in humble confession of guilt and ingenuous self-accusation, in earnest supplication for God's merciful forgiveness of all past offences, and grace henceforth to lead a godly, righteous, and sober life to the glory of his holy name. For godly sorrow is rational and practical sorrow; and however intense our grief and however boisterous its expression, if it bring not forth these fruits, it is far from being that "godly sorrow" which "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of."

Be it observed, then, that sorrow itself, even godly sorrow, while it worketh repentance, does not constitute repentance. Repentance is the whole volume of duty, of which godly sorrow is only the titlepage or the preface. Godly sorrow is the parent; repentance is the product. And what is that repentance of which the apostle speaks, but an effectual turning from sin to righteousness, an entire reconstruction of life and character, a putting-off of the old man, and a putting-on of the new; not the electric flash which vanishes in the very moment of its manifestation, but the morning "light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" not the fluctuating mock-fire that dances at midnight over the marsh, but the steady flame that burns continually upon the altar before the Lord?

Let no one imagine that the humiliation of an Ash Wednesday, the self-crucifixion of a Good Friday, the penitential discipline of a whole Lenten season, will suffice for the salvation of the soul, unless they are followed up by works meet for repentance, constituting the habit of a new life, and wrought into the very texture of a new character. And what a fatal mistake is it, to suppose that the brief compunctions of the death-bed will obliterate the consciousness of guilt, and prepare the sinful soul to stand before its Maker ! that the confessions and supplications of the last few hours of an ungodly life will atone for the manifold delinquencies of all the past, and avert the just vengeance of Heaven from the everlasting future ! Often, alas ! the tears of the dying are, like those of Esau, but a fruitless shower ; yea, the very rain of Sodom, the kindling of an unquenchable fire, the beginning of an endless and immitigable woe. Ahab sorrowed, but did not repent ; and Judas repented, but not to salvation. If mere sorrow were repentance, then were there hope even in hell ; and if all repentance were to salvation, then were there mercy for the Devil and his angels.

Oh ! let us pray God to work in us by his Holy Spirit such a sorrow as shall quench the flames of our lust, and dissolve the hills of our pride, and extinguish our thirst of covetousness, and effectually turn the drift of our nature toward righteousness and true holiness. For, as St. Augustine says, “ though we may not be worthy so much as to lift up our eyes toward heaven, yet are we worthy to weep ourselves blind for our wickedness.” But we must not imagine that our sorrow for sin is to be estimated by

the abundance of our tears, or the frequency of our prayers, or the continuance of our fasting, or any other form of self-mortification ; but by our active hatred of sin, our entire renunciation of all evil practices, and the strenuous warfare we constantly wage against every temptation to their repetition. "Godly sorrow" produces "repentance toward God ;" and repentance toward God is the only "repentance to salvation not to be repented of."

The sorrow is not the repentance, but the fountain whence the repentance flows. And the first stream from this fountain, the first act of true repentance, is an ingenuous confession of sin. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper ; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." But let not our confession be like the unloading of a ship to take in a new cargo. Let not the dog return to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. Let us not come hither day by day to weary the ear of our God with the acknowledgment of iniquities which we never renounce, and afflict our souls with fasting merely to comply with a venerable custom of the Church, and try to dress ourselves up in a formal habit of piety against the approaching Easter festival ; nor imagine for a moment that by such heartless penitence we can ease a burdened conscience, or through such hollow observances obtain forgiveness of our sins. It is the confessing and forsaking that insure the mercy, and no confession will avail without the forsaking. The confession of sin which is not followed

by amendment of life, is like the bleating of the calves and the lowing of the oxen that Saul reserved from the spoil, enabling God out of our own mouth to condemn our imperfect services. If our humiliation before the Lord lead not to the abandonment of all our wicked ways, and the extirpation of his enemies within us, there is still no repentance to salvation. Achan must be brought to judgment; the troubler of Israel must be stoned to death before the congregation. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us. If we spare Agag, our penitence is no better than Ahab's. If we put not away the abominable thing which the Lord hateth, though we fast ourselves into skeletons and weep ourselves into water, we are no nearer our salvation than Esau was to the recovery of his bartered birthright and forfeited blessing, when he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

There is a sorrow for sin — have we not all seen it? which produces no reformation. So far as it goes, it may be quite sincere: but it is not earnest enough to be practical. Purposes are formed, and promises are made, which are effaced from the mind by the first temptation, as the track of the sea-fowl on the strand is obliterated by the first wave of the returning tide. Resolutions are formally taken and solemnly announced, and covenants with Jehovah are entered into in the presence of all his people, which the cares or the pleasures of the world sweep away as quickly as the breeze sweeps the gossamer from the branch. The seed fell upon the rock, or among the thorns, or by the desert wayside, and so brought forth

no fruit to perfection. These spasms of piety, even if a man should die in one of them, have no power to save. Of the repentance described by the apostle, they contain not so much as the first genuine element. No real repentance can there be, unless the purpose becomes an action, and the action grows into a habit, and the habit ripens into religious character.

And how discouraging is all this to the hope of a death-bed repentance ! For against what does the dying sinner resolve, but the sins he can never more commit? and what avails the resolution he has no longer power to put in practice? Can all his tears now obliterate the bitter memory of a long career of crime and folly? Can all his struggles break the chains in which he has been binding himself for so many years? Can he undo in a day or an hour all that he has been doing ever since he left his cradle? Can he so suddenly awake from his sleep of death, and cast away the works of darkness, and put on all the armor of righteousness, and crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and effectually abolish the whole body of sin? Yet this is what he has to do, and nothing less than this is complete repentance. Let him weep as wept the wretched Esau, as wept all Israel in Bochim, as wept the fugitive king in the ascent of Olivet, as wept the broken-hearted disciple for the denial of his Lord ; but what avail his tears against the catalogue of his crimes which conscience now holds up before him? The offering of a contrite heart, even in the mortal hour, God will no doubt accept ; and we would not limit the exercise of His mercy, who assured the expiring thief of paradise, and

died himself to open paradise to every penitent sinner. But where there is no possibility of a practical test, the character of the repentance must be extremely doubtful ; and he who has lived in impenitence may well die in despair.

Fifty years' experience in frequent dealing with the consciences of dying sinners has made me distrustful of death-bed repentances ; and of the many I have witnessed, few were more satisfactory than that of a wretched woman who sent for me to come and pray with her in her last moments ; and when I asked her whether she intended to forsake her sins and lead a better life, she answered — " If I die, I do ; if I recover, I do not." O my friends, hang not your heavenly crowns upon such cobwebs ! Delay your repentance no longer ; the hazard is infinite. Repent, for the work will soon be impossible, and your condition hopeless. Repent, for a life of persistent sin must issue in unavailing and everlasting sorrow. Repent, and show the reality of your repentance, by consecrating yourselves, soul and body, to Him who redeemed you by the blood of his cross. During this solemn penitential season, when Heaven is calling upon you so loudly, and the Church in sackcloth and ashes waits to welcome you within the bond of the holy covenant, come and join her children in the exercise of a "godly sorrow" which "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of."

IV.

*Fourth Day of Lent.**THE HAUNTING SPECTRE.*

REV. H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, A.M.

“Be sure your sin will find you out.” — NUM. xxxii. 23.

A GREAT poet describes the last hours of a certain wicked king, on the night before he went out to his last battle. He pictures him as being haunted by the spectres of those whom he had wronged or slain; and each accusing spirit says, “Let me sit heavy on thy soul to-morrow! despair, and die!”

Every unforgiven sinner leads a haunted life. There are times for the most reckless when the memory of his sin “sits heavy on his soul,” and comes to him as an accusing spectre, saying, “Remember me.” You know what shuts us out from God, — sin. When we deliberately commit a sin, knowing it to be wrong, then that sin comes between us and God like a curtain, and shuts us out from him. We cannot come to God, God will not come to us. There is, as it were, a great gulf fixed; there is that unrepented — and therefore unforgiven — sin, between us and God, and our very prayers are hindered. It may be an old sin, something done or said long ago, and forgotten by you. But, if not repented of, that sin remains, and it will be a haunting spectre in your life,

and will find you out one day, so that you will be forced to cry, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

It may be a sin of long ago, or a sin of yesterday; but so long as it remains unrepented of, it remains unforgiven, remains to haunt you. It will stand at your bedside, and, as it were, whisper to you, "Remember me!" The drunkard who fancies he is leading a gay life, drowning all sorrow in his cups, has his haunting spectre. It will come to him, and say, "Remember me! Remember what you were, and what you *are*. Remember your wasted life, your ruined health, your lost character, your mournful family." The impure man or woman has a haunting spectre. They may try to think lightly of their lost purity, and their tarnished name; but the day comes when the sin finds them out, when the spectre stands before them. It says, "I am the ghost of your old sin. Remember me!" The dishonest man has his haunting spectre. The secret act of fraud so cleverly executed, never discovered, that comes back, and haunts the man, stands between him and peace, blights his life, and embitters his pleasure.

My brethren, is there no such haunting spectre in *your* lives? is there no old sin which you thought dead and buried, which comes back to you, and darkens your way of life? Look back even while I speak, O young men, and young women: is there no sin which you have never told to your mother, no, not even to your God, and which still remains to haunt you? Remember, if that sin is not repented of, it will haunt you to the grave; yes, and beyond the grave; it will haunt you on the day of

judgment ; it will stand between you and God, between you and pardon. "Be sure your sin will find you out." A wise man of old time (Seneca) says, "Let wickedness escape the law as it may, it never fails to do itself justice, for every guilty person is his own hangman." My brethren, if you would have your life free from the haunting spectre, if you would get rid of the hateful presence of a sin, if you would be free men, no longer dragging a chain about with you like slaves, I say to you, repent you truly of your sins : since, as sin shuts us out from God, true repentance brings us back to God through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. What, then, do I mean by true repentance? Do I mean the fact of feeling sorry for our sin? No : sorrow for sin need not be repentance: The drunkard is sorry with a selfish sorrow for the effects of his intemperance. The criminal is sorry for the folly and crime which have brought punishment. The woman who has lost her virtue is sorry that she has forfeited what cannot be regained. But in all these cases it is not *godly sorrow*, it is not sorrow for having sinned against God. True repentance has three parts, three distinct steps. *First*, there must be conviction of sin, accompanied by sorrow for sin. When once we see our sin, and find out how vile and ugly a thing it is, sorrow will follow as a natural consequence. *Secondly*, there must be *confession of sin to God*, — confession not merely of sins generally, but of the special sin or sins of which we desire to repent. *Thirdly*, there must be a *definite resolution of amendment*, — a determination to try, by God's help, to do better for the future. These three parts make

up true repentance. To stop short at being sorry, to stop short at knowing that we have sinned, to stop short at making a vague resolution to do better, is not to repent.

Next, why should we repent? What should the motive be which leads us back to God? Should it be the fear of punishment; the knowledge that the wages of sin is death, and that unrepented—and therefore unforgiven—sin shuts us out of heaven? No: this might drive the coward to confess his fault, but something higher and purer should lead the child of God back to his Father; and this higher and purer influence is *love*. It is love for God, not fear of his wrath, which should make us penitent. If your child loves you, it will come to you, and acknowledge its error, not because it fears your punishment, but because it is grieved at having wounded you. So, if we are children of God, our love for him will cause us to feel bitter sorrow when we have wounded him by our sin. It was love for his father, not misery, or fear of the future, which brought back the prodigal son. It is the shadow of the cross falling on the heart of a sinner, not the gleam of the avenging sword, which leads him home in penitence. Some time ago a young girl left her mother's home, and fell into evil ways. I need not enlarge on the old, sad story. Her mother sought her diligently, but could only discover that she was leading a wicked life in a certain great city. After trying every plan to find her, the mother hit on the expedient of placing her own picture in the principal midnight refuge where these women were accustomed to assemble. For a long time the mother's picture hung on the wall, unseen by the

eyes for which it was intended. Some passed it by with a sneer, — not many, I think ; some looked on it sadly, as they thought of their own mother and their lost home. One night the girl was there, and saw her mother's picture. She saw her gentle eyes looking down so pleadingly, as though they said, "Come home to me ;" and, like the prodigal, she came to herself, and determined to go home. She found her way back to her cottage home ; and as she tremblingly tried the door, it yielded to her touch, and she was in her mother's arms. When, later, she asked her mother how she found an entrance so easily, the mother answered, "I knew you would come back to me, and I left the door on the latch." O dear brethren ! have we not a better picture even than a mother's, dear and blessed though that be ? We have the picture of Jesus Christ on the cross ; his sad eyes look pleadingly on us, and seem to say, "Come back to me. Return, O wanderer, to thy home !" And if we do return, shall we not find the door of mercy open ? Yes, for that door is like the gates of heaven, of which we read "that the gates thereof shall not be shut by day ; for there shall be no night there."

V.

First Sunday in Lent.

TEMPTATION.

REV. H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, A.M.

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.” — MATT. iv. 1.

No subject comes home more closely to us than that of temptation. We all know, to our cost, its subtle influence, its mystic power; so that, if there be one prayer more than another which should be ever on our lips, it should be, “Lead us not into temptation.” Let us try to-day to analyze briefly the subject of temptation in reference to the trial of our Lord, and the trial of ourselves. *Jesus was led into the wilderness of the Spirit.* Here we learn that God is our Leader into all things which are good for our souls, and that even temptation may be good for us. Jesus went into a desert to make expiation for the sins which are committed in society, — to endure fasting for men’s luxury, to suffer want for men’s extravagance. He went into the wilderness immediately after his baptism; teaching us thereby that those who are baptized should die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying their evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living. Jesus entered into the wilderness to fast and pray; and

from that we learn that it is absolutely necessary for us all sometimes to stand aside from the busy crowd, and to seek quiet and retirement for prayer and self-examination, without which our spiritual life must grow feebler and fainter till it dies.

Next, we have to ask reverently, Why does God permit us to be tempted? Now, the word *temptation* has three meanings in the Bible. First, it means a *trial* of our faith, to bring out some hidden virtue; and so Abraham was tempted of God. Secondly, it means a provoking to anger; and thus we tempt God, as it is written, "Your fathers *tempted* me, proved me, and saw my works." Thirdly, temptation means a leading into sin; and thus we are tempted of the Devil. God tries us for our good in order to strengthen our faith, or to bring forth some quality which is dormant in us. The unused limb becomes weak and tender; the neglected instrument of music grows out of tune; the untouched weapon loses its keen edge: so many a man knows nothing of self-denial till God has tried him by a great sorrow. The faith of Abraham was brought out by the temptation to offer up his son. The patience of Job was manifested when he had been tried by the loss of all things. As the aromatic leaf smells most sweetly when bruised; as the precious gem sparkles most highly when cut and polished; as the purest silver is refined seven times in the fire: so we are made perfect through sufferings. Again, God suffers us to be tempted, that we may be watchful. We must prove our armor in the battle; we must find out our weakness; and thus St. Peter bids us, "Be sober, be

vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." And again, God suffers us to be tempted that he may one day give us our reward ; since "*blessed* is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to those who love him."

But we have to think of a yet greater mystery : Why did God the Father allow his Son to be tempted? Jesus was tempted, we may believe, because, in taking our nature upon him, it was necessary for him to be made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. Since he became our Brother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, he was tempted even as we all are tempted. By being tempted of the Devil, Jesus proved the full force of the trials to which we are subjected ; and thus, fully knowing our temptations, he can sympathize to the uttermost with those who are tempted. And Jesus was tempted to show us how to meet temptation, — by watching, by fasting, by prayer ; not giving place to the Devil for a moment ; meeting every temptation with a weapon from God's word. And, above all, Jesus was tempted in order that, by defeating the attacks of Satan, he might break the force of temptation for us, as a billow breaks against a rocky shore ; so that, when the great wave of temptation rolls towards us, it need not go over our soul, but, striking against the Rock of Ages, its force is broken.

Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights. The number forty seems to have had a special mystical meaning. These forty days of Lent are ordained that the faithful

may show forth to the Church and the world the temptation and fasting of Jesus, just as they commemorate his birth at Christmas, his death on Good Friday, and his resurrection at Easter. But Lent means more than this. It is a special time of discipline and trial, when we should go into spiritual training for the race which is set before us ; when, by self-denial (the great want of so many of us), by abstinence, by watchfulness and prayer, we may subdue the flesh to the spirit, and fit ourselves for the life-long temptations in the wilderness of this world. I ask you, my brethren, to make this Lent a *reality*, a help to your spiritual life. *Give up something* for Christ's sake : nothing does our souls so much good as self-denial. Do not follow the sham religion which shuts up a theatre on Ash Wednesday, and allows it to be open all the rest of Lent. Do not follow the sham religion which provides a dainty meal of fish on Ash Wednesday, and calls it a fast ; but make Lent a real time of discipline, by giving up what you like best, or doing some duty which you like least.

I think, if we realized the character and power of him who tempted Jesus in the wilderness, and who tempts us, we should use every special means, and every special hour, set apart for penitence and discipline. We have too vague notions as to the character of the Devil. We too often regard him as a power of evil, an essence, an influence ; instead of recognizing him as a person, a being infinitely stronger, more cunning, more swift in movement and execution, than ourselves. We fail to see that Satan's whole time and energy are occupied in planning

our destruction by means of countless agencies, whose work is to shut us out of that heaven where they were once admitted. With such a being for a foe, we dare not neglect any means of grace, any spiritual training, any medicine of the soul, however bitter. No new art or amusement is discovered, no change in our fortunes takes place, but Satan tries to extract from it some new poison, some fresh temptation. The temptations of our Saviour were entirely from without, since in him is no sin: our temptations are both from within and without. They come from the promptings of our nature, from peculiarities of our temperament, constitution, and health; from the character of our work, or our associates.

There is no place nor time free from the dangers of temptation. Jesus was tempted when engaged in prayer and fasting; so in the house of God, at the very altar itself, we may meet the tempter. No door locks out our thoughts, and no exile can escape from himself. Those whose work is the highest and the noblest are often the most sorely tried; against such, Satan uses his keenest weapons, his most subtle temptations.

Moreover, he suits his attack to the person and the opportunity. It was when Jesus was faint with fasting, that Satan appealed to his natural appetite. It was when David had changed the hardness of warfare for the luxury of an idle palace, that the Devil showed him his neighbor's wife. It was when Ahab wandered discontented through his dominions, that Satan told him how convenient was the vineyard of the Jezreelite. The Devil knows what we do not know, — all our weak points. Think not

that he who spared not the Son of God will spare you. But rather use the opportunities given to you, and look into your hearts, consider your ways, find out when and how you are most easily tempted : then fly to Jesus who was tempted ; fly to prayer, to the armory of God's Word, to the blessed sacrament of love. And so shall we feeble folk be more than conquerors, through Him who for our sakes was tempted, and for our sakes triumphed over temptation.

VI.

Fifth Day of Lent.

LENT IN NINEVEH.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. — JON. iii. 4.

EIGHT centuries before the Incarnation, the proud Assyrian capital was at the acme of its glory. Nearly twice as large as London, it was sixty miles in circumference, with a population probably of two million and a half. Greek and Roman writers agree in representing it as one of the most splendid and powerful cities the world ever saw, while the Hebrew prophets uniformly denounce it as unsurpassed in profligacy and impiety. At length the cry of violence and blasphemy comes up before the Lord, and he determines to punish. Long-suffering and

plenteous in mercy, however, he will not smite without ample warning. Another probation he will give the guilty populace, and see if they will not repent when the peal of approaching doom rings in their ears. His servant Jonah, a prophet of Gath-hepher in the land of Zebulon, is sent to tell them that in forty days the city shall be destroyed.

No ordinary event is it the prophet predicts,—no gradual decay, nor slow work of famine, nor swift wing of pestilence, nor cruelly devouring sword; but some sudden and overwhelming calamity, which shall leave no room for doubt of the divine agency in its infliction—an earthquake perhaps, an inundation from the Tigris, or a tempest of fire and brimstonè from heaven. He who can endue with omnipotence a drop of malignant dew, a breath of empoisoned air, or the fang of a microscopic worm, cannot want means to destroy a people, subvert an empire, or desolate a world. Nineveh is to be overthrown, but there is no specification of the manner or the instrument, and these are unknown alike to the preacher and his hearers. In vain they listen for some overture of mercy; the message is only a message of woe, and the very mysteriousness of the terms gives additional terror to the warning.

None but the infinite God can see the end from the beginning, and fix the date of future judgments. Mercifully he reveals the purposes of his sovereign justice, and calls upon the wicked to behold his uplifted hand, and avoid or avert the threatened stroke. It is tender

pity proclaiming almighty anger, that sinners may repent and be saved. Were it four days instead of forty, dismay would paralyze the people, and render them incapable of rational repentance. But Jehovah, unwilling that they should perish, grants them this gracious respite. His thunder premonishes them of the coming storm, that they may flee to a place of safety. If they repent of their wickedness, he will repent of his threatening; if not, he must punish. Forty days is a long time for a righteous God to wait, but a short time for a guilty people to pray. Yet who knows what mighty results may depend upon a moment?

This is the first mission to the heathen, of which we have any record; and the first missionary is a Hebrew prophet, preaching nothing but wrath and ruin. Jonah enters the city, and lifts up his voice like a trumpet: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." A crowd gathers about him, demanding an explanation of the announcement. He repeats the dread denunciation, and hastens on. Every conscience responds to the sentence. Petrified as by a supernatural awe, they stand gazing after the retiring stranger. Through the thronged and glittering street he pursues his way, ever and anon shouting: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The passer-by pauses, turns and looks, but the terrible prophet is gone. In a few moments, the same dread voice is heard reverberating along some distant avenue. Now the preacher of doom thunders in the market-place, or shouts from the broad ramparts of the city; then the hoarse woe, like the trump of vengeance,

descends from the battlements of a lofty tower, or rings through stately colonnade and richly frescoed hall: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

It is night. The hum of business has gone silent. The throngs have left the thoroughfares. Only the watchman paces his solemn round. The city sleeps, but pleasure wakes in palaces. From a range of lofty windows flash a thousand lights. From the festive chamber rolls the voluptuous swell of music, accompanied with the sound of the light and measured footfall. Beneath the marble wall the prophet stands, and lifts the sepulchral warning: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The dance pauses, the voice of the viol and the flute is hushed, strong hearts are trembling in dire dismay, fair young cheeks grow pale with deadly fear, and anxious eyes from the windows gaze out into the ominous night, while far away is heard once more the appalling cry: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Such the preaching: What is the effect? "The people believed God" — not Jonah, but God. They lost sight of the messenger, in the terrible import of his message. They felt, they knew, that it was divine. Long ago they had heard something of the "Mighty One of Jacob," and his wonders in Egypt, and what he did at the Red Sea, and how he discomfited the host of Amalek, and threshed nations before his chosen, and gave them the heritage of the heathen. The dignified reserve and solemn earnestness of the preacher, his evident disinterested-

ness and superiority to fear, the perfect confidence with which he announces the very day of the predicted catastrophe, and the astonishing report of his own peculiar discipline preparatory to his present mission, all contribute to their conviction; while the consciences of his hearers, like the voice of God within them, corroborate the sentence, and assure them it is just.

With pallid lips they hasten to report the matter to the king. The king calls for the prophet, and hears the terrific tidings for himself. Trembling, he rises from his throne, and exchanges his royal attire for a robe of sackcloth; and from his seat in the ashes goes forth the authoritative order, summoning the many thousands of Assher to the penitential solemnity. It is a national fast, to avert a national judgment. The wickedness is universal, the threatening is universal, and universal must be the humiliation. Such abasement for such a purpose, the brainless unbelief of to-day may openly ridicule; yet this very means may often have averted the wrath of Heaven, and now perhaps preserves the very breath that blasphemes the mercy.

But when and where was ever another humiliation like this, of a whole people before the Lord? Beginning in the palace, it descends to the stall. Men, women and children, of all grades and conditions, take off their ornaments, and cover themselves with sackcloth, and sit in ashes; and from day to day, they eat no pleasant food, nor scarcely moisten their lips with water. And the steed neighs over an empty manger, and the kine low in a thousand enclosures, and the sheep and goats go

bleating along the avenues ; but all nourishment is denied them, that they may share the general grief, and augment it by their piteous moans.

And to fasting is added fervent prayer. The people are idolaters, but well they know that their idols cannot save them. Mightily they cry, both day and night, to the living God, whom they have so grievously offended ; imploring his mercy, that they may not perish in their sins. Prayer is the lightning-rod, that diverts from its aim the descending bolt of vengeance ; the hand that grasps the lifted sword, and suspends or turns aside the fatal stroke. Again and again, in the Arabian wilderness, the prayer of one man procured the pardon of all Israel ; shall not the united supplications of this great city obtain its reprieve from the sentence that has gone forth upon its people ?

And, in proof of their sincerity, these sinners turn every one from his evil way. How many of them are thoroughly and finally reformed, can be known only from the disclosures of eternity ; but the mercy granted them by Him who searcheth the heart, proves the general repentance genuine. For it is amendment of life that evinces the sincerity of sorrow for sin, without which no formalities of penitence can save from punishment. Enough for us to know, that Nineveh was spared nearly a hundred years after Jonah had predicted her destruction in forty days. During that forty days, she kept such a Lent as the world has seldom or never witnessed ; and her flowing tears quenched the wrath of Heaven. She turned from her wicked ways, and God turned from his terrible purpose. She cried for mercy, and he answered

with pardon. Fearful was the judgment foretold, and marvellous the clemency of its revocation. Great is the mercy of God in only threatening, when he might justly punish ; greater, in withholding or averting the punishment threatened.

Yet what encouragement had Nineveh to hope? Mercy was no part of the prophet's message. It contained not so much as a constructive promise of pardon, by an exhortation to repentance and prayer. It was simply the proclamation of doom. But do the people despair? "Who can tell," say they, "if he will not repent, and turn from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Yea, verily, who can tell? Jonah has said nothing about it, but is he not himself a miracle of mercy? Will not He who heard the voice of his disobedient servant from the depths of the sea, hear our united prayers from the depths of our sorrow? Why send us the message, if not inclined to mercy? Why warn us of the danger, if not desirous of our escape? Why delay the doom forty days, if not to afford us opportunity of repentance? And have we not heard of his great forbearance, and frequent forgiveness, and marvellous deliverances, wrought for his chosen people? Who can say that he will not spare us also, when he beholds us prostrate in sackcloth and ashes at his feet? Thus they reason ; and with this dim and dubious hope, they cry mightily for mercy.

But what a change is here ! A few hours ago, these weeping and wailing thousands were all immersed in business, in pleasure, and in crime ; courtiers planning their foul intrigues ; sycophants fawning at the feet of power ;

merchants lying over their worthless wares ; blasphemers vying in the invention and utterance of new oaths ; bacchanals revelling in shameful excess of lust and wine ; young men and maidens whirling in the mazes of the voluptuous dance ; the king and his nobles projecting a predatory campaign against some remote and unoffending people ; generals marshalling their troops, and soldiers girding on their armor ; slaves storing the quiver and stringing the bow, burnishing the chariot and harnessing the steed ; robbery, and treachery, and cruelty, and sensuality, stalking blushless in the blaze of noon, or seeking security in the shades of night ; and innumerable manufactured or imaginary divinities invoked as the patrons of every degrading passion, and lauded as the protectors of crimes which modern civilization has not yet learned to name. Now all is reversed. The king has discarded his embroidered mantle, and the nobles have laid aside their badges of honor, and fair ladies have taken off their jewelry, and the warrior has cast away his weapons, and the steed is turned loose from the chariot, and the hum of industry is unheard in the street, and trade wrangles no more in the mart, and the exchange is an echoless solitude, and the banquet-hall is silent as a cemetery, and boisterous mirth has given place to bitter mourning, and the sweet seductive strain has sunk into a wail, and the whole populace sit weeping in penitential sackcloth, and the inarticulate hunger-cries of beasts mingle with the prayers of the people, and the voice of the city ascends in one vast threnody to God, who graciously hears, and repents him of the threatened evil.

What a lesson for us, my brethren, is contained in this fragment of ancient history ! And how seriously should we ponder our Saviour's reference to it in his solemn warning to the Jews ! "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it ; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold ! a greater than Jonas is here." The words involve a general principle, applicable in all times and places. The guilt of impenitence is in proportion to the mercy rejected, and those who have been saved by inferior means will stand forth as witnesses against those who neglect the great salvation of the gospel. If the hearers of Jesus were more highly favored than those of Jonah, your divine call is fraught with still superior mercy ; and if you repent not under the ministry of grace thus granted you, both Jews and Assyrians will confront you with their fearful testimony before the throne of doom. But one brief warning had the Ninevites ; you have had a thousand. By one of his prophets God spake to them ; he hath spoken to you by his beloved Son. No miracle attended the prophet's ministry ; heaven and earth have attested our divine commission. He uttered no offer, no intimation, of mercy ; we proclaim to you the infinite compassion of "a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." His hearers were all ignorant idolaters ; you know more of the living and true God, than all the heathen millions that ever lived and died. Yet the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, monarch and menial prostrate in the dust, bewailing their wickedness, and imploring an unpromised pardon ; while you, many of

you, alas ! remain impenitent under the most gracious proclamation of forgiveness ever made to the guilty. Therefore the men of Nineveh shall rise up and condemn you in the judgment. Christ hath spoken unto you, and ye have no cloak for your sin. How will you stand before the wrath of the Lamb? Better that you had lived and died in Nineveh twenty-six centuries ago, even though Jonah had never entered its gates, and Jehovah had never been named within its walls !

VII.

Sixth Day of Lent.

THE SLEEP OF SIN.

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, A.M.

Now it is high time to awake out of sleep. — ROM. xiii. 2.

WHAT is the sleep which the apostle tells us it is time to awake from? Alas, my friends, that the word "sleep" should have to be used in the sense we must here understand it! Sleep, most welcome word! Watch a child sleeping at night; look at its innocent face telling of the indwelling innocent soul. Think of the sleep which is so grateful to us all when the toil of the day is ended; the sleep which brings ease and unconsciousness to the sufferer on the bed of sickness; the sleep which comes like a heaven-sent gift to weary and heavy-laden souls

whom sorrow and trials have laid low. Ponder for a moment upon the sleep which the good Lord giveth his beloved. Think of the loved ones you yourselves have known, whose eyes you have closed in death, who have fallen asleep in Jesus. You will then feel tempted to ask, Can there be any other sleep than the sleep of innocence, the sleep of the toil-worn, the sleep of the sufferer, the sleep of the sorrowful, the sleep of those who are resting forever from earthly labors? Ay, my friends, there is. It is the sleep of sin, the confused and restless sleep into which all who are willing slaves to sin have fallen. This is not a sleep whose ending brings with it light and life. It is a sleep which, if we are not roused from it, has no end but death. It is the sleep out of which the apostle bids us with warning cry to awake. It is the sleep of which the Psalmist cried, "Lighten mine eyes, O Lord my God, lest they sleep the sleep of death." It is indeed the sleep of death, the sleep which overtakes the soul on its way to the dark valley of the shadow of spiritual death. It is ever high time to awake out of such sleep.

The sleep of sin is the sleep of the conscience. Every healthful, wakeful soul is in such relation to the divine influences which surround us all, as to be able to hear that inner voice,—that utterance of our inner selves which is in accord with the divine will. But if the soul is in an unhealthy state,—if it is in a state of moral torpor,—the inner voice is no longer heard. It is not that divine influences are withdrawn, but it is that the soul in its dormant state is unfit to respond to divine promptings.

It has so wandered away from God, that it has ceased to be nourished with the thoughts and inspirations which build up the divine life within us. The inner eye has become dull of sight; the inner ear has become dull of hearing. A deathful sleep has overpowered the whole soul. It is a wild, feverish sleep, in which the moral pulse throbs no longer in rhythmical accord with the melodious undertones which ever make themselves heard within the souls of all who earnestly press forward along the pathway of the redeemed, but beats in fitful response to the cravings of the depraved passions and of the perverted will.

The sleep of sin is a sleep from which it is hard to be aroused. The soul is lost in its deathly slumber. The living Christian soul possesses a lively faith. Spiritual things are by the faithful soul discerned; and this discernment is its life, its salvation. But the soul sunk in indifference, in frivolity, in wilful ignorance, in selfishness, is lifeless, is lost, because it is in utter unconsciousness of the things of the higher life. If we see a man who is never in any way moved—as some are even to tearful speechlessness—when hearing an exquisite melody, we say of him that he has no soul for music. If he is never awed by the grandeur of the mountains, if the trees of the Lord disclose to him in vain their wondrous beauty, if in the moving cloud or the restless sea he never sees any thing which induces him to lay aside the thoughts and cares of a lower life, we may say of him that he has no soul for the divine beauty of the natural world. And so, if a man move through this world with no thought of the

future world, with no faith in things not seen by the bodily eye, with no concern for the things hoped for by the Christian soul; with no enkindled spiritual imagination which enables him to realize that the Lord is a living God, that the unseen life is a real life, that the spiritual world is a real world in which all who pass away from this earth are still alive unto God, — then surely we may say of such a one that he has no soul for the things of eternity. We may say that his soul is lost in the slumber of death to all that concerns the higher life. Heaven exists in vain for such a one: his thoughts are never turned thitherward. The Lord of heaven is but a name, which, whenever it appears on the printed page, suggests not the divine and gracious form ever visible to the eye of faith. That the saints of heaven are our brethren with whom we may dwell in sweet communion, is a thought never realized. The life of such a one is so bound up with the things of time, that he is dead to the things of eternity.

And this insensibility of the soul has many phases. There are many ways in which the soul may fall into deadly slumber. In one of its phases, it may be called the sleep of the mind, the torpor of the intellectual life. It is manifested by an avowed indifference to all high culture, by an expressed disbelief in any necessity for it; by a persistent resolve never to enter upon the region of lofty thought; by an indifference and a careless contempt, which, one of our foremost writers has been bold enough to assert, are spreading through the bulk of our highest social class, amongst the high-born and amongst those

whom their fathers' industry and enterprise have raised to positions of vast wealth, spreading through them and influencing their children. Even the great schools to which the sons of the wealthy resort are not free from this taint of neglect of the higher life of culture. For there — so the whisper is going round — boys are allowed to initiate themselves into billiards, and betting, and gambling, when they ought to be subject only to influences which shall make them earnest workers in the world which lies beyond the school. And are there not instances known to us all, of men of high birth abandoning all fine culture to devote their energies to exciting sports, and wild gambling, and hurried to early graves by the ignoble enthusiasm which possessed them?

The soul may also be sunk in the sleep of selfishness, — the selfishness which manifests itself on the one hand in indifference as to others' welfare, in the desire to use others simply to minister to selfish ends, in the disposition to treat servants as human chattels: on the other hand, it may be manifested by men of lower rank in the social scale, possessed by a consuming desire to get on in the world, to get money, to get money if they can, above all things to get money, to gain advantages over their fellows, to rise to power, to add to their pleasures. But whether such selfishness manifests itself in men of high rank, or of low rank, the prevailing thought in the mind of one possessed by it is that his personal welfare and the success of his schemes are of infinitely more importance than any thing else in the world.

The soul, too, may be lost in the sleep of vulgarity,

which is really selfishness in its coarsest form. This is an accomplishment which is not monopolized by any one social class. We see instances of it whenever we see a display of pride of birth and position; whenever we see aristocratic skirts avoiding the mud of plebeianism; whenever we see professional hands drawn back from contact with hands engaged in trade; whenever we see any shrinking back from association with each other, of those who ought to be knit together in the bonds of Christian union. We see manifestations of that blight of the soul we call vulgarity, whenever we meet with those who take delight in saying what gives others pain, in being rude when it is just as easy to be civil, in cringing to superiors, in being insolent to inferiors in rank. I am afraid that we are scarcely conscious how deathful this form of selfishness is, how that this vulgarity is but death mingled with our daily life. We are scarcely conscious how men of other countries, when they come amongst us, marvel at the roughness, the surliness, the gloomy silence, the absence of the smiling face, which they see in far too many with whom they come into contact. Oh! let us cease to cherish this kind of selfishness which so excites the wonder of our fellow-Christians of other countries. Let us always remember our Saviour's golden rule. Let us, even in the small things of life, do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us restrain the tongue which would speak words tending to give pain to others; let us cultivate gentle courtesy; let us meet our fellow-creatures with a genial smile; let our demeanor be most courteous when we speak to those

whose grade is lower than our own ; let us advance to our superiors with a frank and manly fearlessness, free from all corrupting servility.

There is yet another sleep in which the soul may be lost, — the sleep of the bigot and the intolerant. Bigotry and intolerance are based upon ignorance. It is not always a reproach to be ignorant. It is natural, in a world in which men are trained under so many widely differing influences, that some should grow up thorough strangers to the set of ideas with which others have been familiar from the time they first began to think. We ought always to have a thoughtful consideration for those who have no opportunity for seeing things as we see them. But when ignorance becomes aggressive instead of modest, presumptuous instead of distrustful in itself, then it becomes deathful in its character ; it becomes that which we call intolerance and bigotry, that which cannot exist alongside of the love of Christ, which when it enters the human heart constrains it to work no ill to fellow-men. Oh that none were enslaved to such deathful sleep ! Oh that all so enslaved to it would awake out of it into the nobler life of Christian charity ! Oh that in all our churches the ears of the uncharitable and intolerant could from time to time be made to tingle at the sound of the reproaches of those who would stir them up to enter upon a more brotherly attitude towards the whole Christian world !

VIII.

*Seventh Day of Lent.**REST NOT HERE.*

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest. — MIC. ii, 10.

So speaks the inspired Morasthite "to all Samaria and Judah." With odious idolatries and abominable crimes, they have defiled their pleasant heritage; and the land, as if conscious of its dishonor, and taking up the Lord's controversy with his faithless and apostate people, is ready to vomit them forth, as something nauseous and intolerable. Severely has the prophet already reprov'd their sins, and plainly foretold their terrible judgment and long captivity; and now he seems to see them driven away in chains by the cruel conqueror; and while they linger weeping around the gates of the temple, the tombs of their fathers, and the dear ashes of their ruined homes, he cries: "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." Taking leave of Israel, however, we repeat the summons with a Christian application; and may God, by his Holy Spirit, mercifully make it effectual to the disenchantment of those who have chosen this delusive world as their rest!

"Arise ye, and depart." The voice of the prophet is the voice of God. His burden is a message from God

to Israel. He receives the word from God's mouth, and gives the people warning from him. As the angels came to call Lot out of Sodom, so come we to call men out of the world. As the Lord called Abram from Ur and Israel from Egypt, so now he calls you by the gospel to lay hold on the hope that is set before you. In mercy he pleads with you, and demands—"Why will ye die?" By the voice of his Church, by the ordinances of religion, by every admonition of providence, while the living conscience within you perpetually repeats the call, he is summoning you to arise and depart.

Simon Peter would have built tabernacles upon the mount of the transfiguration, and remained there forever. There was some excuse for him, for he was so bewildered by the vision of glory that "he wist not what to say." But what are we to think of men, in the full possession of their rational faculties, enamoured of this inferior scene? How are we to account for the strange fascination that looks upon the vanities of earth and time as the only real and enduring good? How shall we apologize for that inordinate attachment to the deceitful possessions, unsubstantial honors, shadowy and evanescent joys, of this poor fleeting life, which everywhere meets our observation; while heaven opens its gates of pearl, and sends forth its angels, to welcome men to "a city of habitation," "a house not made with hands," "an inheritance undefiled that fadeth not away"? Why should the rational and immortal spirit be diverted from its proper destiny, dragged down from its heavenly throne, enslaved by the vanities of sense, and subjected to the degrading tyranny of sin?

Why should the noblest of God's creatures fall prostrate before a golden calf in the very presence of the divine glory, while the base desires of the flesh inthrall its lofty powers, and the fleeting shadows of time become the objects of its eager pursuit? Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and endowed with the joint-heirship of his everlasting kingdom, why should you cleave to the dust, as if this world were your permanent home, and these delusive joys your highest destiny? "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."

Ponder seriously, I pray you, the fact here stated by the prophet. Mistake not the way for the home, the course for the goal, the sea for the haven, the trial for the reward, the bivouac for the victor's banquet, the battle-field for the rest that remaineth to the people of God. "This is not your rest."

How can you find rest in that which yields no satisfaction? Can material things satisfy a spiritual nature? Can perishable things satisfy an immortal creature? Do the riches, honors and pleasures of this world ever satisfy the soul of man? After all, is there not "left an aching void the world can never fill"? Why are the world's votaries always disappointed and discontented? Because they are always drinking from an empty cup. All earthly enjoyments are

"Like Dead-Sea fruits, that tempt the taste,
But turn to ashes on the lips."

How can you find rest in that which affords no tranquillity? What is this life, but a constant warfare, a con-

test in the arena? What a race and scuffle do we see for riches! what a competition for political preference and official distinction! Many struggle hard for a mere subsistence, our very pleasures are purchased with pains and perils, and life with most of us is a perpetual agony. Not only one with another have we to contend, but also with the Devil and his angels, and with our own ungovernable passions. On such a battle-field, repose is impossible.

How can you find rest in that which offers no security? Accident and danger betide all earthly possessions and enjoyments. "Man heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them;" and often they "make to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle toward heaven." And worldly honors are frequently blasted by the very breath that gave them birth; and all our social enjoyments depend upon a thousand contingencies; and our sweetest domestic pleasures are tender flowers, cut off by untimely frosts; and by a very uncertain tenure we hold the inestimable blessing of health; and upon a thread of gossamer in the breeze life itself hangs trembling.

How can you find rest in that which promises no permanency? The world itself is unstable; and the fashion thereof passeth away; and its most precious things are evanescent as the dew, and fleeting as a summer cloud. Thrones are falling, empires are dissolving, and nations whirling in the mad vortex of revolution. "One generation passeth, and another generation cometh." The proudest dynasties have gone down to the dust, the mightiest capitals are buried in their own ruins, and "the very tombs lie tenantless of their heroic dwellers." Like

autumn leaves, your friends are falling around you. How many of your homes have been despoiled, how many of your hearts broken, by the ravages of death !

“ Friend after friend departs ;
Who hath not lost a friend ?
There is no union here of hearts,
That finds not here an end.”

And will you set up your tabernacle among the tombs, and make the charnel-house your palace, and hope for happiness in fellowship with worms? Oh ! build not your house upon this shifting sand ! Store not up your treasure in this falling castle ! Commit not your eternal fortunes to these treacherous winds and waves ! Sleep not carelessly upon the crest of this rumbling and heaving volcano ! Remain not another night within the walls of the city over which the fire-storm is gathering ! “ Arise ye, and depart ; for this is not your rest.”

IX.

Eighth Day of Lent.

THE WATCHMAN'S WARNING.

REV. H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, A.M.

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night.— *Isa.*
xxi. 12.

FROM his lofty watch-tower the prophet gazes over the land, and sees that its wickedness is great. He had

stood continually on the watch-tower in the daytime, and was set in his watch whole nights. With prophetic eye he looked far off into the future ; and the people asked mockingly, " Watchman, what of the night ? " And he told them that " the morning cometh, and also the night. " The morning of brightness cometh, when the dayspring from on high should appear, and the true light should lighten the Gentiles, and be the glory of God's people Israel. But also the night cometh, the night of darkness and of despair, the night of vengeance, the night of vain remorse, the black night of unrepented, unforgiven sin.

Who is this who is led as a sheep to the slaughter, and who openeth not his mouth ? Why do they smite him with their blows ? why do they pierce his hands and his feet ? There is darkness over the scene, thick darkness over the people : surely " the night cometh. " Again the scene changes : the watchman beholds afar off a garden, fresh and fragrant in the early morning, and sees One standing by an open tomb ; and so he cries, " The morning cometh. " And once more the watchman looks forth, and beholds a city, once the joy of the whole earth ; and he sees the men who loved darkness better than life, the men whose hands smote him with their blows and pierced his feet and his side, the men who would not hearken to the things concerning their peace. And he sees that her enemies have cast a trench about the city, and have compassed her on every side. He sees the eagle of the heathen standing in the holy place, and the steps of the altar red with the blood of murder ; and so the watchman cries, " The night cometh. "

Brethren, the Church is set as a watch-tower, and her priests as watchmen. This life of ours is a twilight season, and the watchman tells us that there comes a brighter morning and a darker night. As in Isaiah's time, so now, there are people who ask of us mockingly, "What of the night?" Some, like Pilate, will not wait for an answer; others, like Felix, wait for a more convenient season to hear further of the matter. The one class of people comes to church, but not to consult the oracles of God. Such people take the holiest words into their mouths, and think not of their meaning. "What of the night?" they ask: "what new sin, what new danger, will you denounce?" And then they go away, the one to his farm, another to his merchandise, and straightway forget what manner of men they are. This is how thousands waste the precious hours of service in God's house. Others, again, ask of God's ministers, "What of the night?" in sheer mockery. "What will this babbler say?" they ask each other: "what new terror has he found for the weak and superstitious? All this preaching is a mistake; we do not believe what the preacher says, probably he does not believe it himself. We used to take the Bible statements for granted, and to trust to what we heard in church; but we are wiser now. We have found that the Bible can be explained away, and that the church-services are only superstition."

Such is the way of many of our young men and women who have made shipwreck of their faith because they *dare* not face the truth. There are others, too, who ask the question, "What of the night?" as prisoners who wait

for the moment of doom. These are they who have practically given up God, who do not pray, who are fast bound in the fetters of some besetting sin. "What of the night?" they cry: "when will this wasted, wicked life pass into the blackness of darkness forever?" But there are others who ask the question in all love and sincerity and faith, "What of the night? Is the weary time of waiting well-nigh over? is the hard battle with sin nearly ended? is the first streak of the dawn yet visible in the sky?" For all, God's minister has the answer, "The morning cometh, and also the night." Learn to look upon the ministers and stewards of God's mysteries as his watchmen; not as those who must prophesy smooth things, and preach pleasant sermons for you to criticise, but as those who have a message of life or death for all. Harken to their warning when they tell you that for you "the night cometh," — the night of death, "when no man can work;" for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest. O careless ones, delighting only in the sunshine of to-day, and laying up no store for hereafter! "the night cometh," — the night of old age, the night of poverty, the night of sorrow, the night when you shall look back mournfully into the past and find no comfort. O sons and daughters who are joined to an idol, the idol of some besetting sin or favorite vice! for you "the night cometh," — here the night of unsatisfied desire, of ruined health, of mournful memories, and hereafter the darker night of banishment from God and exile from heaven. Hear the watchman's warning to-day: —

“Return, O wanderer, to thy home,
’Tis madness to delay;
There are no pardons in the tomb,
And brief is mercy’s day.
Return, return!”

Hear, too, the welcome message of hope and joy, “The morning cometh.” O loving hearts that yearn for Jesus! O sorrowing souls who have borne the cross patiently! O kindly ones who have worked for the great Master! O feeble ones who have tried hard to climb to Jesus’ knees! for you “the morning cometh,” — the morning of better things and brighter joys; the morning when all wrongs shall be righted, all mistakes atoned for; the morning which ends the heart-ache and the pain, the weary waiting and the hope deferred; the morning in Christ’s presence which no sorrow can ever darken, and where they can no more say “*The night cometh,*” for there *is no night there.*

X.

Ninth Day of Lent.

FRUIT OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise. — PROV. xi. 30.

ONE of the old English divines pronounces the work of Christ’s humblest servant in the conversion of a sinner

greater than that of Alexander in the conquest of the world. Measuring man's nature by God's revelations, we cannot charge the estimate with extravagance. Such, indeed, is the magnitude and importance of this moral achievement—the rescue of a human spirit from the power and the peril of sin—that it finds adequate expression only in the anthems of heaven and the threnodies of hell. It has interested the best of men in every age. It has elicited the sympathies and the energies of angels. It has stirred the Infinite heart and moved the Almighty arm. It has brought heaven down to earth, veiled the glories of the Divinity in human flesh, and led the Prince of life to the malefactor's tree. For six thousand years has it occupied the chief resources of the heavenly Wisdom, the grandest expedients of the universal Providence, and all the ineffable riches of the Love divine.

In this work, let us never forget, God is the Alpha and Omega. With him the process begins and ends. The plan is his, the instruments are his, and his alone the efficient agency. To effect his benevolent purpose, he founded the Church, inspired the gospel, commissioned the ministry, and instituted and ordained the holy mysteries of grace. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us, that no flesh should glory in his presence." To us belongs the service; to God redounds the glory. But what honor equals that of being "workers together with him"—dressers of his vineyard, reapers of his harvest, stewards of his household, messengers of his mercy,

the salutary salt of the earth, the light that illumines the world? Such is the sublime vocation described in the proverb, and commended for its excellence and utility: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."

What means "the fruit of the righteous," but his prayers, his charities, his good examples, the virtues which compose his character and adorn his life, and all the efforts and influences by which he shows forth his wisdom in winning souls? To win is to gain by conquest, or to attract by kindly persuasives; and both ideas are comprehended in a version of this golden sentence by one of the early fathers of the Church: "He that sweetly draweth souls to God maketh a holy conquest of them." To win souls, in the best sense, is to bring them to the saving knowledge of Jesus, and subjugate them to his gracious dominion — to lead them from error to truth, from sin to righteousness, and from earth to heaven. It is well expressed in St. Paul's apostolic commission to the Gentiles: — "to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith in Christ." This is the work to which we are called — not the clergy alone, but every baptized believer — to which we were solemnly pledged at the font, and to which we often renew our obligations at the chancel. And if the military chieftain, or the accomplished diplomatist, may be proud to subdue or to reconcile the enemies of his country, and add a city or a

province to its government, how should the soldier and servant of Christ rejoice to bring rational and immortal spirits, ransomed from the thralldom of sin and the tyranny of Satan, delighted captives, to his Saviour's feet! And if skilful generalship, or prudent statesmanship, or fervid eloquence, or devoted patriotism, may be the means of temporal salvation to an oppressed or perilled people, how manifest, in matters of infinitely superior moment, is the truth of the proposition:—“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise”!

More than two thousand years ago an illustrious philosopher said:—“There is nothing great on earth but man, and nothing great in man but mind.” On the missionary platform in New York, an excellent minister of Christ, now half a century in paradise, declared that he who would not, if necessary, travel round the world for the salvation of a soul, had not yet attained the first idea of the soul's value. The soul—how will you compute its worth, or by what standard measure its greatness? Will you estimate it by its nature and origin? It is the breath of God, the inspiration of the Almighty, a copy of the divine excellence, though sadly marred by sin. Will you estimate it by its powers and capacities? The faculties of reason, conscience and free will which it possesses, with its keen and peculiar susceptibilities, and its capability of indefinite expansion and improvement, place it far above all other products of creative energy with which we are acquainted. Will you estimate it by the duration of its being? The body shall return to its dust, the earth

shall wax old as doth a garment, and the heavens themselves shall pass away; but the soul, immaterial and uncompounded, seems to be constitutionally indissoluble and indestructible; and doubtless, without its Maker's fiat to the contrary, it must survive all mundane change and revolution. Will you estimate it by the cost of its redemption? To appreciate that, you must comprehend the Infinite; you must measure the heights and fathom the depths of Godhead; you must know the eternal bliss and glory which the well-beloved Son had with the Father before the world was; and with that bliss and glory you must contrast the shame and suffering of his human life and death, with all his inconceivable horror and anguish when the hand of the Almighty justice "laid on him the iniquity of us all." Will you estimate it by the struggle for its possession and control? Heaven and hell, dividing the good and evil agencies of earth between them, have maintained for six thousand years an unceasing contest over its moral destinies; the prince of darkness desperately assailing the glorious Champion of its salvation, and legions of accursed spirits from the bottomless pit challenging the embattled valor of the sinless sons of God; and the war shall never terminate, nor relax aught of its intensity, till Immanuel, "with his own right hand and with his holy arm," shall have "gotten himself the victory," and put all enemies under his nail-pierced feet forever. Will you estimate it by comparison with the splendid and the precious? What, then, are thrones and crowns and sceptres, the spoils of all conquests, the treasures of all kingdoms, the glory of all empires, the

collected gems of earth and ocean, with mountains of gold and continents of silver? Nay, "what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

"Behold this midnight glory — worlds on worlds!
Amazing pomp! Redouble this amaze;
Ten thousand add; add twice ten thousand more;
Then weigh the whole. One soul outweighs them all,
And calls the astonishing magnificence
Of unintelligent creation poor!"

And if such is the value of the soul, that worlds acquired could not compensate its loss, nor a material universe redeem its forfeiture, how excellent, beyond all power of language or of thought, the work of saving the priceless thing from destruction, and placing it among the crown-jewels of the King of kings! and who so blind and unbelieving as to dissent from the royal statement — "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise"!

But let us look at the matter in another light. The soul is fallen, guilty, perishing; and he who rescues and restores it, confers an incalculable and inconceivable benefit. It is blind, and he opens its eyes; deaf, and he unstops its ears; dumb, and he sets free its tongue; sick, and he renews its health; paralyzed, and he restores its power; polluted, and he leads it to the cleansing fountain; impoverished, and he endows it with the durable riches of righteousness; famishing, and he gives it the

bread of life and the new wine of the kingdom ; gone astray, and he seeks it, and finds it, and brings it back rejoicing ; bound in prison, and he breaks its chain, demolishes its dungeon, and leads it out to daylight and liberty ; condemned to death, and he comes with the announcement of pardon, converting the scaffold into a throne, the death-cap into a crown of glory, and the avenging sword of justice into a royal sceptre of love.

And who shall limit the effect of your labor, or trace the blessed influence to an end? In the mountain solitudes of the North-West, you shall find a spring trickling drop by drop from a rock, and your own foot were sufficient to arrest the little rill ; but follow its course, and it becomes a brook, a torrent, a mighty river, the highway of commerce and travel for half a continent. A handful of wheat, brought from the Levant, and cast into the soil of our new world, grew and multiplied ; and the little harvest, sown the next year, brought forth an ampler crop ; and so it continued increasing, till whole provinces were stocked with the product, and myriads in Europe blessed America for their bread. Thus the beneficent effect of faithful Christian labor is an ever-swelling stream and an ever-enlarging growth. Your humblest efforts are rewarded with richest blessings. The seed you sow in the family blossoms and bears fruit in the Church. The child you bring to baptism, the youth you prepare for confirmation, the penitent you lead to holy communion, the delinquent brother you stir up to fresh activity of duty, the habitual transgressor you dissuade from the ruinous error of his way, each shall be a means of incalculable good

to others, and they again to a greater number, and the influence shall descend to future generations, while converts multiply from age to age as the drops of the evening dew ; and new missions founded, and new parishes organized, and new laborers sent into the Lord's vineyard, and new zeal and energy developed in every department of Christian endeavor, and new hearts by the million transfused and fired with the ineffable love of Christ, shall attest the wisdom of righteousness and the excellence of its fruitage.

And who shall say to what extent you thus affect the happiness of the universe — what tides of sweet and holy emotion you send through myriads of regenerate human hearts — what peace passing all understanding — what joy unspeakable and full of glory ; and how the kindling rapture swells and circulates throughout the Church below, till it overflows in anthems, and rolls echoing up to heaven, gladdening the angels of God ; and as the miracles of grace multiply with years, and harvest after harvest is gathered into the garner, with every fresh achievement of redeeming love, the soul that was so heavy in Gethsemane is satisfied with the fruit of its travail, and the heart that quivered upon the point of a soldier's spear experiences a thrill of compensatory bliss which naught but Infinite benevolence can know ; and so all heaven unites with all that is heavenly on earth, in witnessing to the precious fruit of righteousness, and the transcendent wisdom of winning souls !

XI.

Tenth Day of Lent.

SELF-SUBJECTION.

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, A.M.

I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection : lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. —
I COR. ix. 27.

A VERY homely Northern farmer whom I used to know was once speaking of the difference between two kinds of preaching he was accustomed to listen to. Some sermons, he said, were preached *at* the congregation : in others, the preacher seemed always to include himself amongst his listeners, — seemed always to manifest the consciousness of the necessity of himself taking heed to his ways, lest his footsteps should slide.

The apostolic exemplar of all such lowly-minded preaching of the latter kind is St. Paul. His utterances are characterized by no lofty pride. This very Epistle to the Corinthians is a wonderful instance of self-abasement. He speaks of himself as having been chosen by God as one of the foolish things of the world, as one of the weak things of the world, as one of the base things of the world, as one of the things which are despised ; as having been so chosen to confound the things that are wise and the things that are mighty. When he came amongst his

brethren, to preach unto them Christ crucified, he came not with excellency of speech or wisdom, but he came in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. Though he preached the gospel, he had nothing to glory in, he said. He rebuked those who thought to make much of him, and who expressed each of them their allegiance to him in the words, "I am of Paul." He, Paul, was nothing: God was every thing. He, Paul, must decrease in their esteem, and Christ must increase. Such of them as had spiritually discerned the things of the Spirit of God were God's husbandry, not his; they were Christ's, and Christ was God's. If his words seemed at any time to call attention to himself as one to be looked up to as a guide, they were immediately qualified by others which showed that what he really preached was a "looking unto Jesus." If he said, "Be ye followers of me," he at once added, "as I also am of Christ."

And the burthen of all his preaching was, "Christ crucified." Does the import of these words ever really possess our souls? Do I and you grasp the idea underlying them? and, having grasped it, do we try to incarnate it in our very lives? Christ crucified! The humanity of Christ glorified! but how? By finishing the work the Father gave him to do,—by finishing it on the cross. The humanity of Christ sanctified! but how? By a death of shame and torture. The humanity of Christ made perfect! but how? By suffering. The humanity of Christ sacrificed, made holy! but where? On the cross. The humanity of Christ made evermore divine! but how? How but by lowliness and toil and suffering,

by the lowliness and suffering of a despised and rejected life, which ended in the death on the cross of Calvary. This is what is meant by "Christ crucified."

But "*preaching* Christ crucified," — what is that? what was it that St. Paul preached both to himself and to others? what was it in effect but this, that just as Christ's humanity was glorified, sanctified, made perfect, sacrificed, made divine, by suffering life-long and ending on the cross, so was the human nature of Paul himself, and of those to whom he ministered, to be glorified, sanctified, made perfect, sacrificed, made divine, by being fixed to the cross of earthly suffering. This St. Paul was ever preaching. Necessity was laid upon him to preach it. "Woe unto me," he said, "if I preach it not." He was ever preaching that baptism into Jesus Christ was baptism into his death, — was the baptism of suffering; that walking in newness of life was not possible for man unless there had been submission to the discipline of the cross; that the likeness of the resurrection could not be manifested in humanity, unless there had been shown forth what was typified in the death of Christ, unless there had been a crucifying of the old unsanctified nature. By death alone of the unregenerate nature, can man be made free from sin. By thus dying, can it alone be said that we live. By thus being dead with Christ, can we be assured that we live with him, — live with him unto God, live with him the divine life of union with the Father.

And this, my friends, is that teaching of the cross — that gospel of the cross — commenced by our Lord himself when he said, "If any man will come after me, let

him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." This is the teaching thus commenced by our Lord, and ever on St. Paul's lips. This is the teaching underlying his constant phrase, — "the preaching of Christ crucified."

And this teaching is at this Lenten season brought before us in the selections from the Church's sacred writings, which we speak of as the Epistles and Gospels. Here we see our Lord himself taking up the cross of bodily mortification and fasting. And if the cross of fasting is to be preached by a human voice, it must be preached as St. Paul preached. His preaching ever had reference to his own experience. All preaching of the cross must be such as was his. It is not for a preacher to say to those to whom he ministers, "My brethren, now is the time to vary the usual course of your daily lives by a little fasting; now is the time to abstain from meats and delicacies; now is the time to deny the flesh its cravings; now is the time to restrain the pleasures of sense; now is the time to have quiet fish-dinners instead of the usual rich fare." St. Paul never preached the cross of self-denial and abstinence in this way. If he laid a burden upon any one, it was upon himself. It was himself that he pledged to a life of self-denial. It was his own body that he kept under — brought into subjection to the spirit. He speaks of himself and his brethren in the ministry as being constrained to approve themselves "as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings." And we who to-day preach the gospel of the cross must preach it as he preached it, — must

preach it by pointing to the divine example of Christ, by trusting to the power of Christ himself to stir up all holy desires in the souls who draw nigh to him, and to whom he draws nigh in loving union ; and by showing forth in our own lives that the example of his self-denial and submission to the cross of suffering has not been presented to us in vain. The divine secret of the gospel of the cross is not made known by formally announcing that it is a duty for men on certain days, or during certain seasons, to fast. It must be left to Christ himself to whisper the divine secret of the daily cross to the humble soul yearning for a closer union with God, longing to grow in true spiritual life, and willing to submit to every chastening discipline, that so the inward spirit may rise to diviner life.

Christ has ever been whispering the divine secrets of the heavenly life into the souls of all the earnest and devout. Self-denial and suffering have not been shunned by those who have borne his name, and who have been transformed into his divine likeness. Many there have been, who, like the Apostle Paul, could say that they were "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus ;" that they were for Jesus' sake always being "delivered unto death." The growth of the Christian soul is a great mystery. But this we know of it, that it is a growth which goes on forever, and that it has to begin while the soul is still in union with the body. And while it is so united, it may be said of it that it must increase, while the body must decrease. Oh ! it dawns upon every human soul after it has entered upon the life of union with Christ, that such life means a life of submission to

the cross of Christ. It means other things too ; but submission to the discipline of the cross is an essential element. The soul finds, too, that if the pleasures of life occupy all its thoughts ; if the desires of the flesh are ever encouraged to assert themselves ; if taking life easily, eating and drinking and being merry, are allowed to become the chief concerns, — the soul finds, that, if it thus gives the body the start in the race of life, itself will never obtain the heavenly prize. It finds that if it is to strive successfully for the mastery, if it is to obtain an incorruptible crown, it will only do so by keeping under control the body, and all its desires and earthly longings ; by bringing it into subjection to the higher life of the spirit. This is the secret which is revealed to all earnest souls striving for closer union with God. This is the secret of the Lord which is ever with those whose hearts are possessed with a desire to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. This is the law of the inward man, the law of the hidden soul, which was revealed to St. Paul, and which will be revealed more fully to me and to you, if we strive as he strove to live the life of the crucified One. But it will be forever unintelligible to us if we simply hear it spoken in human words. Its meaning will not dawn upon us until we hear it uttered to us by the still small voice of the Divine Whisperer to human souls. St. Paul's preaching of Christ crucified being me crucified and you crucified ; being the glorification, the sanctification, the making perfect, the sacrifice, the becoming divine, of the human nature which we share with Christ, so that it may be exalted into union with his divine

nature, — this will be words, mere words, sounds, mere empty sounds, to me and to you, unless it is borne to our souls upon the breath of the Divine One, who is ever yearning to become one with us, so that we may become one with him.

XII.

Second Sunday in Lent.

LEAVEN OF THE KINGDOM.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. — *MATT.* xiii. 33.

FREQUENTLY, in Holy Scripture, the same figure of speech serves different purposes ; a metaphor or a simile being employed to express things quite dissimilar, or even opposite in their nature. The lamb stands for both foolish timidity and divine gentleness. The serpent denotes either despicable craftiness or commendable wisdom. The lion, which represents the cruel tyranny of Satan, is emblematical also of the royal dignity of Christ. And wine symbolizes, not only the wrath of Almighty God, but with equal propriety the joy and blessedness flowing from his love. So leaven typifies, on the one hand, human malice and wickedness, corrupt teaching,

and hypocritical pretension ; and on the other, as in this fine parable of our Lord, the diffusive and regenerative power of the Christian faith.

The chief point of comparison, you will observe, lies in that quality of the leaven, resulting from its affinity for the meal, by which it moves the mass and imparts its own nature to every particle. Christ first quickened his apostles, endowed them with his own Spirit, and sent them to preach the gospel of the kingdom in all the world and to every creature. From them the gracious influence passed over to others, producing in individuals and communities that salutary ferment which resulted in new hearts, new habits, new characters, and new relations to God. The subjects of this spiritual renovation, organized into a society, with ministry and sacraments ordained by Christ himself, were "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And every soul saved by their agency became an instrument in the salvation of others, diffusing the original blessing over the earth, and sending it down the ages.

And let us bear in mind the fact that the leaven is not found in the meal, but placed there — a foreign agent, brought to supply a want in the mass to be leavened. And thus the gospel of our salvation is not the manifestation of a power already existing and known in the world, but a new power brought down from heaven ; not a human philosophy evolved, but a divine revelation imparted ; not the product of man's genius, but the embodiment of the manifold wisdom of God ; not the development of the better parts of our nature, but a quickening principle

infused into the paralyzed and death-stricken spirit ; not the smouldering spark amidst the ashes fanned into a flame, but a live coal taken with the tongs from the altar, purifying the heart of the sinner while it hallows the lips of the prophet ; not the rallying of all surviving energies around the original centre of life in the moribund soul, but the breath of God going forth over the valley of dry bones, till the multitudinous dead tremble into a living army of the Lord.

But is there no human agency in the process? Very naturally the parable speaks of a woman, because the mixing of dough and the baking of bread are ordinarily a woman's work. Yet, without unwarrantable allegorizing, we may see in this woman the Church, which in Holy Scripture is frequently spoken of as a woman, a virgin, the bride of Christ, and the mother of saints. And is not the Church, with her ministries and sacraments, the organ through which God manifests his truth and grace for the salvation of men — the channel through which he conveys his Holy Spirit to the conscience and the heart, regenerating, purifying and transforming? Where and when were sinners ever brought from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, without the agency — conscious or unconscious — direct or indirect — of the Church? For this very purpose the Church was organized, the apostles were commissioned, and the mysteries of grace were instituted. For this purpose the Holy Spirit has taken up his abode in the Church, to remain with her forever, making her indeed the salt of the earth and the light of the world. For this he has transfused

her system with his own vital energy, inspired her clergy with his own heavenly charity, and fired many of her laity with a self-exhausting zeal, enabling her to mingle a pure and noble leaven with the corrupt mass of humanity for the effectual leavening of the lump.

It is observable also, that the leaven is said to be, not merely mixed with the meal, but hidden in it. And this suggests the important fact, that the process of grace is secret, silent and gradual ; working outward from within ; beginning in the invisible and spiritual world, but effecting in due time a thorough change in the external and visible. "The kingdom of heaven is within you," and "cometh not with observation." The divine leaven is a hidden power. The princes of this world knew it not, neither did its philosophers understand the mystery. The heathen writers in the early ages of Christianity betray an utter ignorance of what was going on under the surface of social life around them. Little thought the haughty masters of the world that their very catacombs contained a weakness stronger than their strength, a folly wiser than their wisdom, a patience more enduring than their cruelty, a gentleness destined to outlast and vanquish their violence, a poverty which should enrich the nations beyond all their vaunted affluence, a humility that must sit enthroned above the wreck of their demolished power and splendor. All were quite unconscious of that mysterious force which was slowly but surely undermining their whole system of idolatry, and ready to subvert all their cherished institutions, till Christianity planted her feet upon the steps of the throne and grasped the sceptre of the

Cæsars. None of the sages of those times, the far-seeing statesmen, nor the most sagacious of the emperors, ever recognized this divine agency, or dreamed of the irresistible energy which it embodied, till they found it upheaving the whole mass, permeating and influencing every thing, even to the remotest limits of the empire.

Nor is this so very wonderful, when we consider the apparent insignificance of the means employed, and their manifest inadequacy of themselves to the accomplishment of so grand a result. The woman has no choice wines, nor rich cordials, nor strong chemicals, nor mysterious machinery — nothing but a little fermented dough. Shall this make the whole three measures of meal a light and wholesome substance, fit for the palates of princes and the table of the king? “What will this babbler say?” What will these fishermen, publicans, tent-makers, do? What is to be expected from this new fanaticism, this moon-stricken madness, but disastrous failure and ruin? Is not the system utterly unphilosophical, and the sect everywhere spoken against, despised at Jerusalem, ridiculed at Antioch, laughed to scorn at Athens, treated as stark insanity in Rome, while the whole power of the empire is pledged to its overthrow? So thought the world of nascent Christianity. And still, to the worldly philosopher, to the rationalistic and unspiritual man, the means which God employs for the salvation of souls seem most unlikely, if not utterly inadequate and contemptible. What to him is the Bible, but an old book, which may or may not be true, to be placed upon the same shelf with Livy, Josephus, and the Mussulman’s Koran? and what

its teachings, better than those of Plato, Confucius, and Zoroaster? and what its miracles, more than the monstrous myths of the Pagans, the pious tricks of the Jesuits, or the blasphemous travesties of modern spiritualism? What to him is the Holy Ghost, but the simple personification of good influences? and his inspiration, but the elevation of human genius? and his quickening and transforming power, but the natural development or habitual culture of the best and noblest in man? And what to him is the Christian saint, but one who practises the purest morality from the highest motives? and the Christian Church, but a mere human institution, with no express divine warrant or sanction? and the Christian ministry, but simply a profession, with no better aim or function than that of medicine or that of law? and the Christian sacraments, but bare ceremonial shows to make an impression upon the imagination, if not worthless signs and symbols of fanciful unrealities? So low, indeed, are these divinely ordained agencies estimated, that men refuse to recognize the civilization and culture, the devotion and virtue, the liberty and affluence, everywhere surrounding them, adorning their own condition, and blessing their domestic estate, as in any manner or measure the effect of the grace of God. They eat of the bread and acknowledge its excellence, but deny the efficacy of the leaven.

Yet the change is wrought, and the change is radical, and in due time it shall be manifest and all-pervading. Is not this the prophecy of the parable? The entire mass of meal is ultimately leavened. Three measures

are mentioned, because that was about the quantity taken for an ordinary family baking. Three measures made one ephah, which was just what Abraham and Gideon each prepared for his angelic guest. But some find here a mystical reference to the three chief faculties of our spiritual nature—the intellectual, the emotional, and the volitional; others, to the three main elements of our complex personality—the *soma*, the *psyche*, and the *pneuma*; others again, to the three post-diluvian progenitors of the human race—Shem, Ham, and Japheth; and others still, to the three great divisions of the globe known when our Lord uttered the parable—Asia, Africa, and Europe. These theories may be more fanciful than real, and more ingenious than rational; be that as it may, the whole mass is leavened—all the faculties of our nature, all the elements of our being, all the divisions of our race, all the sections of our world. Grace triumphs over nature, and humanity is renovated and redeemed. As the leaven makes the solid lump light, porous and spongy, penetrating it throughout with innumerable small cavities, by which the heat obtains access to every portion, as is necessary to the perfect baking of the bread; so the truth and grace of God in the gospel of the kingdom affect the human recipient in every faculty and element of his nature, rendering him susceptible to every worthy and beneficent influence, creating him anew in Christ Jesus unto righteousness and true holiness. And as the leaven in the meal manifests its presence by its operation and effect; so does this divine agency in the Church, by the regeneration of individual character and

the moral transformation of society. None of us needs a professional baker to tell him which is leavened and which unleavened bread; and may we not as readily discern in general between the righteous and the wicked, between the subjects and the enemies of the kingdom? Whatever is human is changed and transformed by the work of the woman and the contact of the leaven. All the distinctions of race and country, rank and culture, clime and custom, age and occupation, yield to the heavenly influence, and find the gospel of Christ the saving power of God. But what a marvel, unprecedented and unparalleled in history, have we in this glorious achievement — a crucified carpenter displacing the Jupiter of the Capitol, and triumphing over the superstitions of all nations — a Jew upon a gibbet worshipped by the whole world, and that worship enduring and increasing through the ages! What deified emperor has held his temple, his statue, or even his tomb? Where is all that mighty population of gods once created by human adulation? Their monuments have vanished, and their dust cannot be found. But Jesus of Nazareth, crowned with thorns, still reigns upon his cross. By crucifixion having descended lower than death, he makes his very ignominy the fountain of his glory, and his vanquished enemies prophesy the universality and eternity of his empire. The day is coming — and who knows what convulsions, and revolutions, and amazing providences, and unprecedented miracles of power and grace, may hasten its advent? when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea, and the many kingdoms of

this world shall become the one kingdom of Christ, who must reign for ever and ever.

But as there are certain conditions necessary to the effectual operation of the leaven in the meal, so are there well-known conditions on which depends the power of the kingdom of heaven in the salvation of the human soul. As the leaven will not work well in either too high or too low a temperature, so the process of divine grace through the gospel may be prevented by fiery fanaticism or obstructed by frigid indifference. Whether an individual or a community is to be wrought upon, there must be no corruption of the leaven by any foreign or unfriendly admixture — no heresy mingled with the apostolic faith — no human theory, nor philosophical speculation, nor science falsely so called, wrought into the system of the Church — no new discoveries, developments, inventions, or improvements, to mar the influence or counteract the energy of that which was perfect at the first and will be perfect to the last. And there must be a due conjunction of wisdom, charity and godly zeal on the part of the human agency employed ; with susceptibility, docility and humility in the subject — a candid mind, a contrite heart, a practical application of the truth, and fervent prayer for heavenly aid. If you oppose the gospel, resist the Holy Spirit, and reject the counsel of God against yourselves ; if you come to church for the gratification of your taste, for the satisfaction of your social feelings, from the desire of conformity to public custom, or in a spirit of captious or sceptical criticism ; if you tread the Lord's courts, and compass his altars, and listen to his word, full of pride

and vanity, envy and jealousy, malice and bitterness, ambition and covetousness, or any evil temper or unholy principle ; oh ! there is not an angel of God that with all his wisdom could instruct you, with all his reason convince you, with all his eloquence persuade you, with all his heavenly charity move and melt and mould the sinful heart. You must be ready to receive the blessing ; you must appropriate the gift by faith in the Divine Giver ; you must put away all your evil practices, and deny all your evil passions — whatever is incompatible with the kingdom of grace, or disqualifying for the kingdom of glory — and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save the soul — which, with a power mightier than miracle, shall cleanse the leper, cast out the demon, and quicken the dead in trespasses and sins. And if you would see the Redeemer's kingdom prosper around you, as well as realize its saving power within you ; if you would bring the King's enemies, subdued and reconciled, to his feet, and add gems to his diadem of many crowns ; you must devote yourselves, soul and body, a living sacrifice, upon his altar, who gave himself a ransom for you upon the cross. And thus will you prove, by the increasing power and purity of the Church, by the triumph of truth and holiness over error and wickedness, by the rallying of faithful hearts animated with a divine ardor around Immanuel's banner, by myriads of blood-washed saints transfused with the love of Jesus and hastening to their immortal home, that "the kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

XIII.

Eleventh Day of Lent.

THE PURIFYING HOPE.

REV. A. MACLAREN, D.D.

And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. — I JOHN iii. 3.

THAT is a very remarkable “and” with which this verse begins. The apostle has just been touching the very heights of devout contemplation, soaring away up into dim regions where it is very hard to follow: “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

And now, without a pause, and linking his thoughts together by a simple “and,” he passes from the unimaginable splendors of the beatific vision to the plainest practical talk. Mysticism has often soared so high above the earth that it has forgotten to preach righteousness, and therein has been its weak point. But here is the most mystical teacher of the New Testament insisting on plain morality as vehemently as his friend James could have done.

The combination is very remarkable. Like the eagle he rises; and like the eagle, with the impetus gained from his height, he drops right down on the earth beneath!

And that is not only a characteristic of St. John’s teaching, but it is a characteristic of all the New-Testament

morality. Its highest revelations are intensely practical. Its light is at once set to work, like the sunshine that comes ninety millions of miles in order to make the little daisies open their crimson-tipped petals ; so the profoundest things that the Bible has to say are said to you and me, not that we may know only, but that knowing we may *do*, and *do* because we *are*.

So John here : "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And" (a simple coupling-iron for two such thoughts) "every man that hath this hope in him," — that is, in Christ ; not in himself, as we sometimes read it, — "every man that hath this hope," founded on Christ, "purifies himself, even as he is pure."

The thought is a very simple one, though sometimes it is somewhat mistakenly apprehended. Put into its general form, it is just this : If you expect, and expecting hope, to be like Jesus Christ yonder, you will be trying your best to be like him here. It is not the mere purifying influence of hope that is talked about ; but it is the specific influence of this one hope, the hope of ultimate assimilation to Christ, leading to strenuous efforts, each a partial resemblance of him, here and now. And that is the subject I want to say a word or two about this morning.

I have only two things to say about this matter, and one of them is this : Of course, such strenuous effort of purity will only be the result of such a hope as that, because such a hope will fight against one of the greatest of all the enemies of our efforts after purity. There is nothing that makes a man so down-hearted in his work of self-improvement as the constant and bitter experience

that it seems to be all of no use ; that he is making so little progress ; that with immense pains, like a snail creeping up a wall, he gets up, perhaps, an inch or two, and then all at once he drops down, and farther down than he was before he started.

Slowly we manage some little patient self-improvement ; gradually, inch by inch and bit by bit, we may be growing better : and then there comes some gust and outburst of temptation, and the whole painfully reclaimed soil gets covered up by an avalanche of mud and stones, that we have to remove slowly, barrow-load by barrow-load. And then we feel that it is all of no use to strive ; and we let circumstances shape us, and give up all thoughts of reformation.

To such moods then there comes, like an angel from heaven, that holy, blessed message, "Cheer up, man ! 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Every inch that you make now will tell then, and it is not all of no use. Set your heart to the work : it is a work that will be blessed, and will prosper."

Again, here is a test for all you Christian people, who say that you look to heaven with hope as to your home and rest.

A great deal of the religious contemplation of a future state is pure sentimentality, and, like all pure sentimentality, is either immoral or non-moral. But here the two things are brought into clear juxtaposition, — the bright hope of heaven, and the hard work done here below. Now, is that what the gleam and expectation of a future life does for you ?

This is the only time in John's Epistle that he speaks about hope. The good man, living so near Christ, finds that the present, with its "abiding in him," is enough for his heart. And, though he was the seer of the Apocalypse, he has scarcely a word to say about the future in this letter of his; and when he does, it is for a simple and intensely practical purpose, in order that he may enforce on us the teaching of laboring earnestly in purifying ourselves.

My brother, is that your type of Christianity? Is that the kind of inspiration that comes to you from the hope that steals in upon you in your weary hours, when sorrows and cares and changes and loss and disappointments and hard work weigh you down, and you say, "It would be blessed to pass hence"? Does it set you harder at work than any thing else can do? Is it all utilized? Or, if I might use such an illustration, is it like the electricity of the aurora borealis, that paints your winter sky with vanishing, useless splendors of crimson and blue? or, have you got it harnessed to your tram-cars, lighting your houses, driving sewing-machines, doing practical work in your daily life? Is the hope of being like Christ a thing that stimulates and stirs us every moment to heroisms of self-surrender and to strenuous martyrdom of self-cleansing?

XIV.

*Twelfth Day of Lent.**THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN.*

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, A.M.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. — 2 COR. iv. 18.

THE distinction here made is between the material and the spiritual, — between gross ponderable substance, and substance ethereal and divine. It is true that in latter days the word “matter” has been applied even to all ethereal substances. It has been found that all have more or less of materiality. But we must retain the distinction as we find it in the language of our forefathers, and not be afraid of the revelations which science may make as to the nature of things ethereal or breath-like. We must not be unmindful of this, that language is framed in accordance with the appearances of things, and that there is a sense in which it may be said that things are not what they seem. We are inclined to shrink from associating the densely material things around us with the unseen spiritual world. But the things which seem so grossly material to us do so only because of the presence of the great attracting body, the earth. If they could be removed many millions of miles away from the earth, they

would lose the greater part of the weight which gives us the idea of their gross materiality ; but, for all that, they would be just as material as before. So that the accidental properties of the things we see around us, if we dwell upon them alone, and wrongly think of them as unchangeable, will not at all help us to a conception of the things as they are in their very essence, or as they might appear to ourselves if the conditions of our existence were changed.

Such thoughts as these, it seems to me, will help our minds to grasp the idea of the reality of the unseen soul, and of the unseen spiritual world ; and these are the eternal things of which St. Paul speaks.

The soul, we may be assured, is a very real thing, and will always be so. To strip it of its ethereality, of its breath-like structure, because such words are now seen to have kinship with those which denote the dense materiality which is so apparent to our bodily eyes, is to reduce immortality to the mere perpetuation of the thought that men have lived, so that it becomes only an immortality inshrined in the memories of future generations, or an existence only of the unembodied thoughts, affections, and aspirations which determine the state of growth in grace in which the departed one quits the visible for the invisible world, in the all-comprehensive remembrance of the Divine One. But this is not the immortality that we as Christians look for and long for. This is but annihilation. How could any progressive life be possible for the soul so refined away into nothingness? We look for a future existence in which we shall each preserve our own

identity. This we cannot do unless we are clothed upon with the spiritual body of which St. Paul speaks. The remembrances of an earthly life could not be entangled in vacuum. The future life must have links connecting it with this. 'The unseen soul is now in intimate connection with our visible bodies ; and the unseen world is not sundered from the world we see : but, though they are unseen, they are very real. And we must be ever pondering upon them, so that the conviction of their reality may be impressed more and more upon our consciousness.

A wonderful kinship is becoming more and more possible for us to conceive of as existing between the visible world and the unseen spiritual world, in which the unseen parts of our beings are destined to enter upon an eternity of existence. This thought, which is every day more and more taking possession of men's minds, helps us to look upon God's created world with more reverent eyes. God himself is enthroned in the unseen world. All who have ever had on earth the human form divine are living there in his presence. The unseen world underlies the visible world, and God is ever very near to us, and the spirits of the departed are ever in our midst. Their existence now, and the world in which they live, are just as real and substantial to them as our existence and the visible world are to us. But that world in which they live is not wholly hidden from us. Thoughts of it are continually presenting themselves to the mind, and must be heeded. The thoughts of it which have been borne in upon the minds of our forefathers, and which have

been preserved for us, we call inspired thoughts, and we regard the pages on which they are inscribed for us as sacred. And the thoughts were inspired: they were borne into the souls of men by the breath of the Divine. And the pages on which they are noted down are sacred: no one can read them reverently without hearing within himself the silent whisperings of assurance as to their truth; and man has ever been conscious that he has but yielded to a divine intuition in preserving them as treasures transcending all other things in the world.

But the Divine One not only grants us revelations of the unseen world by means of the treasured-up inspirations of the past. The world around us is an ever-present witness to us of the existence of things unseen. The world of nature,—that ever-changing world, the world of that which is ever being born out of the life of God, the world in which we may look upon ever-new manifestations of the great life of the Divine One,—that itself is an ever-present token of a presence Divine. The sacramentalism of nature — for such is the name we may give to this great principle — is presenting itself to the minds of men with increasing vividness. “The things that are made” are being more and more discerned as suggestive to the human mind of thoughts respecting “the invisible things of God.” These thoughts are presenting themselves only to reverent and loving souls.

“ When love interprets what the eye discerns,
When mind discovers what is really meant,
When grace improves what man from nature learns,
Each sight and sound becomes a sacrament.”

Even science every day reveals more and more what a divine beauty there is in this world, which has lain hidden from the eyes of men of the past. It teaches us, that, if our bodily eyes were differently constituted, we might be able to discern that all along there has been underlying material things an unseen glory of color and form. There are spectrum rays of light which make no impression on the eye as it is at present constituted; and there are some men whose vision is so fine that they see rainbow brilliances of color unperceived by others. These facts impress upon our minds the thought that this present world is, in the eyes of the divine all-seeing One, all aglow with glories unrevealed to us. Are we never to see the underlying beauty? May it not be this very hidden glory which the blessed ones behold with rapture now with the unveiled eyes of the spirit-body?

That there is an unseen glory underlying all created things, that there is a Divine presence in the world, that the whole world is indeed to us a sacramental token of that presence, we have in the Christian Church an ever-present witness in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Divine One who is ever saying to us of the sacramental bread and wine, "This is my body, this is my blood," and who thus reveals himself to the human soul as the nourisher of its spiritual life with his own divine life,— he to all reverent souls is ever saying, of the world which is visible to us all, "This is my bodily vesture, this is the chosen medium for the inflowing of my life-giving Spirit to you." He is ever clothing himself with light as with a garment; he is ever moving with the wings of the

wind ; the heavens are ever declaring his glory, and his celestial splendors are ever disclosing themselves to our inner souls by means of the wonders around us in earth and sky and sea.

Oh, may the thought of a Divine presence in the world, to which our solemn Eucharist is a perpetual witness, grow within us, and be the theme of many reverent meditations ; and may we too, as we recognize with more and more vividness that mystic presence, be ever submissive to divine teachings, ever yearning to be enriched with divine wisdom, and to be sanctified with divine love, with the love and wisdom which will bring us more and more into oneness with the Divine, and more and more into sweet communion with one another, with our fellow-Christians the wide world over, and with all the faithful departed in the spiritual world which is ever around us.

XV.

Thirteenth Day of Lent.

DRAWING NEAR TO GOD.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

It is good for me to draw near to God. — Ps. lxxiii. 28.

AND to be habitually so far from thee, O my God ! is not this my greatest evil ? To worship thee at such a distance and serve thee with so cold a heart, is not this

my sorest sin and misfortune? To live without thee, without the knowledge and the love of thee, is not this the most dreary and the most hopeless of all human conditions? Without thee, how can I perform my duties, endure my sorrows, enjoy my mercies, fulfil the purpose of my being, or look for any thing better beyond the grave? Thou art the soul of my soul, my light in darkness, my strength in weakness, and the inspiration of all my joy. Both helpless and hopeless I am, if thou withhold thy succor and conceal thy face. It is good for me to draw near to thee.

Is it good for the sheep to be with the shepherd? It is never safe without him. It can neither defend itself, nor supply its own wants. With what confidence the timid creature follows, responding to the familiar call! Thou, O Lord! art my Shepherd. I shall not want. Thou makest me to lie down in green pastures. Thou leadest me beside the still waters. With heavenly food thou restorest and sustainest my soul. Folded and defended by thee, I am safe from the thief and the robber, from the wolf and the lion, from the pit and the precipice, from stumbling upon the dark mountains amidst the windy storm and tempest. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff shall comfort me.

Is it good for the child to be with the father? He needs the father's counsel, guidance, guardian care, and daily providence. The child who, like the prodigal of

the parable, forsakes his father, shall fall into temptations and miseries, from which he shall escape only by returning to his father's house. Thou, O Lord ! art my Father. Born of thy Holy Spirit, I am partaker of thy holiness. Thou hast given me the spirit of adoption, by which I cry, Abba, Father. Assured of thy love, I come to thee with confidence, and ask for what I need. Ever with thee, all that thou hast is mine. I am thy heir, and joint-heir with thy First-born, to an inheritance incorruptible and imperishable, reserved for all thy saints, as well as me, in heaven.

Is it good for the pupil to be with the teacher? The latter can help him with his lessons, solve difficult problems for him, clarify what is too obscure for his apprehension, lead him through the intricate labyrinths of science, and unseal to him the pure fountains of classic lore. Thou, O Lord ! art my Teacher. To me, as to Israel of old, thou sayest : "I am the Lord thy God that teacheth thee." In thy school, I sit me down at thy feet, and how sweet to my soul are the words of thy mouth ! The great text-book is before me — thy written will, thy published law, the code of thy kingdom, a lamp to my feet, a light to my path, able to make me wise unto salvation. What were all the science and learning of this world, to that which thy Word and thy Spirit teach me ?

Is it good for the servant to be with the master? Some servants, away from the master, are unfaithful, and worse than useless ; and the best servants may labor better in the master's presence, with his words to stimulate and his

smiles to cheer them. Having the master to direct them, they are confident of pleasing and satisfying ; and this relieves the toil, and makes the duty a delight. Thou, O Lord ! art my Master. I recognize thy authority, and rejoice to do thy will. Loving thee because thou hast loved me, I desire to serve thee with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. I owe thee the utmost service of every faculty throughout the endless duration of my being. Submission to thy will, thanksgiving for thy goodness, admiration of thy wisdom, imitation of thy holiness, veneration of thy majesty, confidence in thy faithfulness, obedience to thy commandments, and fidelity to all the interests of thy kingdom, are what thou requirest of all. In thy presence, and with thy approval, the yoke is easy and the burden light — the joy of “angels strong and seraphs blest.”

Is it good for the artist to be with the model? He wants to copy it. He must have it constantly before him. He must observe and study every part. The minutest point must not escape his notice. The closer the attention, the better the copy. Thou, O Lord ! art my Model. In natural perfections I cannot be like thee ; but thy moral qualities, with the aid and inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, I may transfer to my own soul, as the painter transfers to his canvas, tint after tint and feature after feature, the picture before him ; or as the sculptor, with careful diligence and anxious toil, transfers to the rough and shapeless marble every lineament of the beautiful statue, till the perfect copy stands forth as faultless as the original. So would I reproduce thy moral image in this fallen

and polluted soul. In my measure, I would be holy as thou art holy, loving as thou art loving, forbearing as thou art forbearing, forgiving as thou art forgiving, beneficent as thou art beneficent, in all things perfect even as thou art perfect. And to do this, I must be much with thee, studying thee, copying thee, yielding to the impress of thy Holy Spirit. Nay, my Sun of righteousness! let me be the mirror to catch thy blessed beams, and glow with the reflection of thy glory!

Is it good for the sinner to be with the Saviour? To whom but him shall he go for pardon, for cleansing, for resurrection, for eternal life? To whom shall he make his confession and supplication, and in whose mercy and merit shall he trust, if not in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe? Thou, O Lord! art my Saviour. By thy incarnation in my nature thou hast drawn near to me. Perfect God and perfect man, I find in thee the measure of my soul's necessities — wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption. Thy mercy is greater than my guilt. Thy blood can cleanse me from all uncleanness. Thy peace shall tranquillize my troubled conscience. Thy love shall fill me with joy unspeakable and full of glory. What can I do for myself — wretched bond-slave of sin and Satan? Am I not continually breaking the vows which I have made, and falling again into the follies and offences of which I have repented? O Captain of my salvation! with contrite heart to thee I come. Every other dependence I renounce; every other hope I abandon. Thine is the only name given under heaven by which I can be

saved. “Thou art my hiding-place ; thou wilt preserve me from trouble ; thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance.” Therefore, with all my sinfulness and misery, it is good for me to draw near to thee.

XVI.

Fourteenth Day of Lent.

“THE BRIDAL OF THE EARTH AND SKY.”

REV. A. MACLAREN, D.D.

Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. — Ps. lxxxv. 10.

THIS is a lovely and highly imaginative picture of the reconciliation and re-union of God and man, “the bridal of the earth and sky.”

The poet-psalmist, who seems to have belonged to the times immediately after the return from the exile, in strong faith sees before him a vision of a perfectly harmonious co-operation and relation between God and man. He is not prophesying directly of Messianic times. The vision hangs before him, with no definite note of time upon it. He hopes it may be fulfilled in his own day ; he is sure it will, if only, as he says, his countrymen “turn not again to folly.” At all events, it will be fulfilled in that far-off time to which the heart of every prophet

turned with longing. But, more than that, there is no reason why it should not be fulfilled with every man, at the moment.

It is the ideal, to use modern language, of the relations between heaven and earth. Only that the Psalmist believed, that as sure as that there was a God in heaven, who is likewise a God working in the midst of the earth, the ideal might become, and would become, a reality.

“Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” We have here *the heavenly twin sisters, and the earthly pair that corresponds*. “Mercy and truth are met together,” — that is one personification ; “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other,” is another. It is difficult to say whether these four great qualities are to be regarded as all belonging to God, or as all belonging to man, or as all common both to God and man. The first explanation is the most familiar one ; but I confess, that looking at the context, where we find throughout an interpenetration and play of reciprocal action as between earth and heaven, I am disposed to think of the first pair as sisters from the heavens, and the second pair as the earthly sisters that correspond to them. Mercy and truth, two radiant angels, like virgins in some solemn choric dance, linked hand in hand, issue from the sanctuary, and move amongst the dim haunts of men, making “a sunshine in a shady place ;” and to them there come forth, linked in a sweet embrace, another pair whose lives depend on the lives of their elder and heavenly sisters, — righteousness and peace. And so these four, — the pair of heavenly origin,

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and the answering pair that have sprung into being at their coming upon earth, — these four, banded in perfect accord, move together, blessing and light-giving, amongst the sons of men. Mercy and truth are the divine, righteousness and peace the earthly.

Let me dwell upon these two couples briefly. "Mercy and truth are met together," means this: that these two qualities are found braided and linked inseparably in all that God does with mankind; that these two springs are the double fountains from which the great stream of the river of the water of life, the forthcoming and the manifestation of God, takes its rise.

"Mercy and truth." What are the meanings of the two words? Mercy is love that stoops, love that departs from the strict lines of desert and retribution. Mercy is love that is kind when justice might make it otherwise. Mercy is love that condescends to that which is far beneath. Thus the "mercy" of the Old Testament covers almost the same ground as the "grace" of the New Testament.

And truth blends with the mercy; that is to say, truth in a somewhat narrower than its widest sense, meaning mainly God's fidelity to every obligation under which he has come; God's faithfulness to promise, God's fidelity to his past, God's fidelity, in his actions, to his own character, which is meant by that great word, "he sware by *himself*."

Thus the sentiment of mercy, the tender grace and gentleness of that condescending love, has impressed upon it the seal of permanence when we say: Grace and

truth, mercy and faithfulness, are met together. No longer is love mere sentiment, which may be capricious and may be transient. We can reckon on it: we know the law of its being. The love is lifted up above the suspicion of being arbitrary, or of ever changing or fluctuating. We do not know all the limits of the orbit, but we know enough to calculate it for all practical purposes. God has committed himself to us; he has limited himself by his obligations, by his own past. We have a right to turn to him, and say, "Be what thou art, and continue to us what thou hast been unto past ages." And he responds to the appeal. For mercy and truth, tender, gracious, stooping, forgiving love, and inviolable faithfulness that can never be otherwise, — these blend in all his works; "that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation."

Again, dear brethren, let me remind you, these two are the ideal two, which, as far as God's will and wish are concerned, are the only two that would mark any of his dealings with men. When he is, if I may so say, left free to do as he would, and is not forced to his "strange act" of punishment by my sin and yours, these, and these only, are the characteristics of his dealings.

Nor let us forget, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, *full of grace and truth.*" The psalmist's vision was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, in whom these sweet twin characteristics, that are linked inseparably in all the works of God, are welded together into one in the living personality of Him who is

all the Father's grace embodied, and is the way and the truth and the life.

Turn now to the other side of this first aspect of the union of God and man. “Mercy and truth are met together ;” these are the heavenly twins. “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other ;” these are the earthly sisters who sprang into being to meet them.

Of course I know that these words are very often applied, by way of illustration, to the great work of Jesus Christ upon the cross, which is supposed to have reconciled, if not contradictory, at least divergently working sides of the Divine character and government. And we all know how beautifully the phrase has often been employed by eloquent preachers, and how beautifully it has been often illustrated by devout painters.

But, beautiful as the adaptation is, I think it is an adaptation, and not the real meaning of the words, for this reason, if for no other : that righteousness and peace are not in the old Testament regarded as opposites, but as harmonious and inseparable. And so I take it that here we have distinctly the picture of what happens upon earth when mercy and truth that come down from heaven are accepted and recognized, — then righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Or, to put away the metaphor, here are two thoughts : first, that, in men's experience and life, *righteousness and peace cannot be rent apart*. The only secret of tranquillity is to be good. “First of all, King of righteousness, and after that King of Salem, which is the King of peace.” “The effect of righteousness shall be peace,” as Isaiah,

the brother in spirit of this psalmist, says ; and on the other hand, as the same prophet says, "The wicked is like a troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt ; there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." But where affections are pure, and the life is worthy, where goodness is loved in the heart and followed even imperfectly in the daily life, there the ocean is quiet, and "birds of peace sit brooding on the charmed wave." The one secret of tranquillity is first to trust in the Lord, and then to do good. Righteousness and peace kiss each other.

The other thought here is that righteousness and her twin sister peace only come in the measure in which the mercy and the truth of God are received into thankful hearts. My brother, have you taken that mercy and that truth into your soul, and are you trying to reach peace in the only way by which any human being can ever reach it,—through the path of righteousness, self-suppression, and consecration to him?

Ah, brethren ! That is the crown and climax of the harmony between God and man, that his mercy and his truth, his gifts and his grace, have all led us up to this : that we take his righteousness as our pattern, and try in our poor lives to reproduce its wondrous beauty. Do not forget that a great deal more than the psalmist dreamed of, you Christian men and women possess, in the Christ who of God is made unto us righteousness, in whom heaven and earth are joined forever, in whom man and God are knit in strictest bonds of indissoluble friendship ; and who, having prepared a path for God in his mighty

mission, and by his sacrifice on the cross, comes to us; and, as the Incarnate Righteousness, will lead us in the paths of God, leaving us an example, that "we should follow in his steps."

XVII.

Fifteenth Day of Lent.

KEEPING THE HEART.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.—
PROV. iv. 23.

GOLD thou mayest neglect, jewels discard, bonds and stocks repudiate, houses and lands suffer to be alienated, most precious things of earth cast into the depths of the sea. But thy heart thou must keep, "for out of it are the issues of life." It is the throne of thought, the fount of feeling, the mainspring of action. Hence come thy words, beam thy smiles, flow thy tears, arise thy motives, march forth thy purposes like hosts arrayed for war. All virtue and all vice lie within its province — all impressions and impulsions for good or ill. It is the home of the supreme sentiment, dominating the whole man — the battle-ground of the great central principle, where character and destiny are decided — the pivot on which eternal judgment turns — the gate opening into heaven or hell.

Therefore, "keep thy heart with all diligence" — literally, "with all keeping" — by every available means, in every possible manner. Keep it carefully, watchfully, actively, valiantly, and constantly. Keep it "meek and lowly, pure and holy," full of faith and love, ever tender and penitent, always growing in grace and divine knowledge, daily becoming more and more a copy of the heart of Christ.

How wouldst thou keep a treasure or a jewel? Enclose it in a safe or a casket, deposit it in a vault or a tower, lock it up in a castle or a treasure-house, guard it by a cordon of soldiery, suffer none but the proper custodian to touch or approach it, and come often in person to see that all is right and secure? So keep thy heart.

How wouldst thou keep a garden or a vineyard? Hedge it around for protection, gather out its stones, pluck up every weed, carefully plough and pulverize, enrich with fore gn fertilizers, plant with choice seed and select roots, train each shoot in its proper direction, prune the wanton luxuriance of its growth, and watch the ripening product night and day? So keep thy heart.

How wouldst thou keep a parlor or a chamber? Sweep its carpets, dust its furniture, brush down the spiders' webs, adorn the walls with pictures, hang rich tapestry around the windows, paint and varnish when necessary, beautify with bronze and marble, see that ventilation and temperature are salutary, preserve every thing in proper place and harmonious order, and suffer no unsightly thing or noisome odor within? So keep thy heart.

How wouldst thou keep a castle or a fortress? Make

its outer walls strong and high, fortify them with lofty towers, man them with brave defenders, surround them with a deep and broad fosse, so construct the drawbridge that it may quickly be closed or opened, secure the iron gates with solid bolts and bars, guard the approaches on all sides by armed men, permit no stranger to enter without due examination and proper passport, and have every thing ready for the reception of the noble or princely occupant when he shall come? So keep thy heart.

How wouldst thou keep a fortune or an inheritance? Assure thyself that the title is perfectly good and valid, ascertain whether thy guardian or executor is quite honest and trustworthy, examine the documents to know if every thing has been legally devised and done, promptly attend to the correction of any and every fault or flaw in the proceedings, acquaint thyself with the chief points of law involved in the matter, make sure that there is no incumbrance upon the property that can hereafter invalidate thy claim, avoid whatever might disqualify thee for thy future position, and by every needful virtue make thyself worthy of the inheritance? So keep thy heart.

Keep it for God; he made it for himself, and comes to claim it as his own. Keep it for Christ; he bought it with his precious blood, and will not part with his purchase. Keep it for the Church; consecrated at her font and her chancel, she has a living claim upon its every pulsation. Keep it for the world; the divinely constituted salt of its conservation, the greatly needed light of its illumination. Keep it for thyself; character in this life, destiny in the next, interests immeasurable as immortality,

depend upon thy fidelity to the duty. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

XVIII.

Sixteenth Day of Lent.

MAN'S TRUE TREASURE IN GOD.

REV. A. MACLAREN, D.D.

The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup. — Ps. xvi. 5.

WE read, in the law which created the priesthood in Israel, that "the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them. I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel" (Num. xvii. 20). Now, there is an evident allusion to that remarkable provision in this text. The Psalmist feels that in the deepest sense he has no possession amongst the men who have only possessions upon earth, but that God is the treasure which he grasps in a rapture of devotion and self-abandonment. The priest's duty is his choice. He will "walk by faith and not by sight."

Are not all Christians priests? and is not the very essence and innermost secret of the religious life this,—that the heart turns away from earthly things, and deliberately accepts God as its supreme good and its only portion?

“The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup.” The two words which are translated in our version “portion” and “inheritance” are substantially synonymous. The latter of them is used continually in reference to the share of each individual, or family, or tribe, in the partition of the land of Canaan. There is a distinct allusion, therefore, to that partition, in the language of our text; and the two expressions, part or “portion,” and “inheritance,” are substantially identical, and really mean just the same as if the single expression had stood, “The Lord is my portion.”

I may just notice, in passing, that these words are evidently alluded to in the New Testament, in the Epistle to the Colossians, where Paul speaks of God “having made us meet for the portion of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

And then the “portion of my cup” is a somewhat strange expression. It is found in one of the other Psalms, with the meaning “fortune,” or “destiny,” or “sum of circumstances which make up a man’s life.” There may be, of course, an allusion to the metaphor of a feast here; and God may be set forth as “the portion of my cup,” in the sense of being the refreshment and sustenance of a man’s soul. But I should rather be disposed to consider that there is merely a prolongation of the earlier metaphor, and that the same thought as is contained in the figure of the “inheritance” is expressed here (as in common conversation it is often expressed) by the word “cup;” namely, that which makes up a man’s portion in this life. It is used with such a mean-

ing in the well-known words, "My cup runneth over;" and, in another shape, in "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" It is the sum of circumstances which make up a man's "fortune." So the double metaphor presents the one thought of God as the true possession of the devout soul.

Now, how do we possess God? We possess things in one fashion, and persons in another. The lowest and most imperfect form of possession is that by which a man simply keeps other people off material good, and asserts the right of disposal of it as he thinks proper. A blind man may have the finest picture that ever was painted; he may call it his, that is to say, nobody else can sell it: but what good is it to him? A lunatic may own a library as big as the Bodleian, but what use is it to him? Does the man who draws the rents of a mountain-side, or the poet or painter to whom its cliffs and heather speak far-reaching thoughts, most truly possess it? The highest form of possession, even of things, is when they minister to our thought, to our emotion, to our moral and intellectual growth. We possess even them really, according as we know them, and hold communion with them.

But when we get up into the region of persons, we possess them in the measure in which we understand them, and sympathize with them, and love them. Knowledge, intercourse, sympathy, affection,—these are the ways by which men can possess men, and spirits, spirits. A man that gets the thoughts of a great teacher into his mind, and has his whole being saturated by them, may be said to have made the teacher his own. A

friend or a lover owns the heart that he or she loves, and which loves back again. And not otherwise do we possess God.

Such ownership must be, from its very nature, reciprocal. There must be the two sides to it. And so we read in the Bible, with equal frequency, the Lord is the "inheritance of his people," and his people are "the inheritance of the Lord." He possesses me, and I possess him — with reverence be it spoken — by the very same tenure; for whoso loves God has him, and whom he loves he owns. There is deep and blessed mystery involved in this wonderful prerogative, that the loving, believing heart has God for its possession and indwelling Guest; and people are apt to brush such thoughts aside as mystical. But, like all true Christian mysticism, it is intensely practical.

We have God for ours, first, in the measure in which our minds are actively occupied with thoughts of him. We have no merely mystical or emotional possession of God to preach. There is a real, adequate knowledge of him in Jesus Christ. We know God, his character, his heart, his relations to us, his thoughts of good concerning us, sufficiently for all intellectual and for all practical purposes. I wish to ask you a plain question: Do you ever think about him?

There is only one way of getting God for yours; and that is by bringing him into your life by frequent meditation upon his sweetness, and upon the truths that you know about him. There is no other way by which a spirit can possess a spirit that is not cognizable by sense, ex-

cept only by the way of thinking about him, to begin with. All else follows that. That is how you hold your dear ones when they go to the other side of the world. That is how you hold God, who dwells on the other side of the stars. There is no way to "have" him, but through the understanding accepting him and keeping firm hold of him. Men and women that from Monday morning to Saturday night never think of his name, how do they possess God? And professing Christians that never remember him all the day long, what absurd hypocrisy it is for them to say that God is theirs!

Yours, and never in your mind! When your husband, or your wife, or your child, goes away from home for a week, do you forget them as utterly as you forget God? Do you have them, in any sense, if they never dwell in the "study of your imagination," and never fill your thoughts with sweetness and with light?

And so, again, when the heart turns to him, and when all the faculties of our being, — will, and hope, and imagination, and all our affections, and all our practical powers, — when they all touch him, each in its proper fashion, then and then only can we in any reasonable and true sense be said to possess God.

Thought, communion, sympathy, affection, moral likeness, practical obedience, — these are the way (and not by mystical raptures only) by which, in simple prose fact, is it possible for the finite to grasp the Infinite, and for a man to be the *owner* of God.

Now, there is another consideration very necessary to be remembered; and that is, that this possession of God

involves, and is possible only by, a deliberate act of renunciation. The Levite's example, that is glanced at in my text, is always our law. You must have no part or inheritance amongst the sons of earth, if God is to be your inheritance. Or, to put it into plain words, there must be a giving-up of the material and the created, if there is to be a possession of the divine and the heavenly. There cannot be *two* supreme, any more than there can be two pole-stars, one in the north and the other in the south, to both of which a man can be steering.

You cannot stand with —

“One foot on land, and one on sea,
To one thing constant never.”

If you are going to have God as your supreme good, you must empty your heart of earth and worldly things, or your possession of him will be all words and imagination and hypocrisy. Brethren, I wish to bring that message to your consciences to-day.

And what is this renunciation? There must be, first of all, a fixed, deliberate, intelligent conviction lying at the foundation of my life, that God is best, and that he and he only is my true delight and desire. Then there must be built upon that intelligent conviction that God is best, the deliberate turning-away of the heart from these material treasures. Then there must be the willingness to abandon the outward possession of them, if they come in between us and him. Just as travellers in old days, that went out looking for treasures in the western hemisphere, were glad to empty out their ships of their less

precious cargo in order to load them with gold, you must get rid of the trifles, and fling these away, if ever they so take up your heart that God has no room there. Or rather, perhaps, if the love of God in any real measure, howsoever imperfectly, once gets into a man's soul, it will work there to expel and edge out the love and regard for earthly things.

Just as, when the chemist collects oxygen in a vessel filled with water, as it passes into the jar it drives out the water before it; the love of God, if it come into a man's heart in any real sense, in the measure in which it comes will deliver him from the love of the world.

But between the two there is warfare so internécine and endless that they cannot co-exist; and here, to-day, it is as true as ever it was, that, if you want to have God for your portion and your inheritance, you must be content to have no inheritance amongst your brethren, nor part amongst the sons of earth.

Men and women, are you ready for that renunciation? Are you prepared to say, "I know that the sweetness of thy presence is the truest sweetness that I can taste; and lo! I give up all besides, and my own self.

"O God! of good the unfathomed sea,
Who would not yield himself to thee"?

And remember that nothing less than these is Christianity, — the conviction that the world is second and not first; that God is best, love is best, truth is best; knowledge of him is best; likeness to him is best; the willingness to surrender all if it come in contest with his

supreme sweetness. He that turns his back upon earth, by reason of the drawing power of the glory that excelleth, is a Christian. The Christianity that only trusts to Christ for deliverance from the punishment of sin, and so makes religion a kind of fire-insurance, is a very poor affair. We need the lesson pealed into our ears as much as any generation has ever done, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." A man's real working religion consists in his loving God most, and counting his love the sweetest of all things.

The one true, pure, abiding joy is to hold fellowship with God, and to live in his love. The secret of all our unrest is the going-out of our desires after earthly things. They fly forth from our hearts like Noah's raven, and nowhere, amid all the weltering flood, can find a resting-place. The secret of satisfied repose is to set our affections thoroughly on God. Then our wearied hearts, like Noah's dove returning to its rest, will fold their wings, and nestle fast by the throne of God. "All the happiness of this life," said William Law, "is but trying to quench thirst out of golden *empty* cups." But if we will take the Lord for "the portion of our cup," we shall never thirst.

Let me beseech you to choose God in Christ for your supreme good and highest portion; and, having chosen, to cleave to your choice. So shall you enter on possession of good that truly shall be yours, even "that good part, which shall not be taken away from you."

And, lastly, remember that if you would have God, you must take Christ. He is the true Joshua, who puts

us in possession of the inheritance. He brings God to you, — to your knowledge, to your love, to your will. He brings you to God, making it possible for your poor sinful souls to enter his presence by his blood, and for your spirits to possess that divine Guest. “He that hath the Son hath the Father;” and if you trust your souls to Him that died for you, and cling to him as your delight and your joy, you will find that both the Father and the Son come to you and make their home in you. Through Christ the Son, you will receive power to become sons of God; and if children, then heirs, — heirs of God, because joint heirs with Christ.

XIX.

Third Sunday in Lent.

PURSUIT OF CHARITY.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

Follow after charity. — I COR. xiv. 1.

ST. JOHN was pre-eminently the apostle of love. On the bosom of the Divine Love incarnate, he learned to love with an ardor and a tenderness among men seldom equalled and never surpassed. Very justly is he called “the disciple whom Jesus loved;” for the Master found in him something so congenial and attractive, that on

several recorded occasions he treated him with exceptional favor and familiarity. Love is the keynote of his epistles, on which he dwells so sweetly, and to which he returns so often, that we have come to consider this Christian quality as more fully exemplified in his character, and more constantly inculcated in his writings, than in those of any other apostle. Yet it is a remarkable fact, that the most comprehensive account of love — of its nature, its properties, and its relative importance — as well as the most touching and beautiful — to be found in the whole volume of Holy Scripture, is from the pen of St. Paul.

In natural temper, early education, and apostolic investiture, the two writers differed widely; yet both describe the same Christian affection with its various manifestations and fruits, but each in his own characteristic manner. St. John, being of a contemplative turn of mind, seems most at home in the calm inner depths of love; while St. Paul, always intensely practical, delights to trace its development and application in the active life of men. With the former, it is the tranquil repose of full satisfaction and perfect confidence; with the latter, it is an out-bursting energy and soul-consuming zeal. The one theorizes divinely, and his eloquent logic leads captive the mind and the heart of the reader; the other translates his theory into practice, and makes love the characteristic principle of Christian life, the very pulse of regenerate and sanctified souls.

Here the matter is set before us by St. Paul in a light the most vivid and attractive; charity — which is only another name for love — being exhibited as the crowning

excellence of Christianity, the sum of all social morality, the image of God in the soul of man — greater than the gift of tongues, wiser than the knowledge of mysteries, holier than the power of prophecy, sublimer than the mightiest miracles, more bounteous than the largest beneficence, more heroic than any voluntary martyrdom, more enduring than all supernatural endowments, and in its sphere and functions transcending both faith and hope.

Just before his passion, Jesus said to the twelve: "A new commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another — as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." His favorite apostle, who could never forget that saying, many years afterward, with frequent repetitions and variations echoed the precious word in the ears of the whole Catholic Church. He calls the command both a new command and an old command, and the simplest disciple need not stumble at the paradox. The new command is old because it calls for mutual love, which God has required from the beginning; the old command is new because Christ's love to us all is to be the motive, the model and the measure of our love one to another. Love is the very essence of Christianity. Brotherly love is the half of Christianity, and the best evidence to the world that we have been with Jesus and learned of him. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The word is as true to-day as when it fell from the lips of our Lord.

But very apt we are to deceive ourselves, claiming to

be his disciples while we lack the one thing that more than all others can entitle us to the name. Let the apostle correct our errors. If we have not the spirit of Christ, we are none of his. Wanting the charity here described, whatever else we may possess, we are not practical Christians. To a complete Christian character all these attributes are essential. In different Christians they may exist in different degrees, and in the same Christian some of them may be more largely developed than others; but in every renewed and purified heart the germinal principle must dwell, the generic virtue in which they all inhere.

Deem not yourselves Christians, then, in the true practical sense, because you have received the initiatory sacrament of the Church, and been brought into the bond of the covenant, and incorporated with the mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; for what avails the baptismal blessing which is not accompanied by Christian love? and how will the washing of regeneration save you, if you lead not the rest of your life according to this beginning? Woe to them that bear the name of Christ without his image, receive the sign of the cross without the spirit of the Crucified, and call Jesus Lord and Master while they are totally destitute of the charity which his service requires!

You may frequent the house of God, and delight in its eucharistic solemnities; you may erect the family altar, and gather your children around the morning and evening sacrifice; you may observe with the utmost exactness your seasons of private devotion, and commune frequently

with revealed truth in the written Word ; but by no such formalities can you deceive Him who looketh upon the heart, and will never mistake the flower for the fruit, the shadow for the substance, the casket for the jewel, the external act for the internal principle.

And what is all your knowledge, if you have not charity, but the cold moonbeams gilding the mountain snows which they cannot melt? “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity buildeth up;” and the difference between them is that of the gay balloon inflated with gas, and the marble palace filled with the precious treasures of art and empire. The most intelligent citizen may basely betray his country, and the best-informed Churchman may prove the Judas of the band. Boast as you will of your illumination, the lamp you rejoice in may but light your way to hell.

And religious emotion — what is that but the mark of a lively temperament? A person of sensibility will sigh and weep, or laugh and applaud, at a musical or dramatical performance, in which there is no religious element, the sentiment of which is even corrupt and demoralizing, as multitudes do under sensational sermons and in exciting revival scenes. Is it not the very shallowness of the soil that makes the seed spring up so quickly and wither so soon away?

“It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing;” but zeal is not in every case accompanied by charity, and vain were the effort to create a surplus stock of one virtue to make up for the deficiency of another. What though you give more than your neighbor to the

great work of the Church, or go forth yourself as one of the videttes of the sacramental host, and wear out the energies of life in contending for the faith, or fall beneath your banner in the foremost rank of battle? Is the fiery ardor that impelled you to such martyrdom more pleasing in the sight of Heaven than the meek and gentle charity that more than all other virtues glorified the militant Captain of your salvation?

Believe me, dear brethren! against this dangerous delusion you cannot be too carefully guarded. A fearful thing it is, too fearful for expression in words, to deceive one's self in "the vast concerns of an eternal scene." An error in temporal affairs subsequent care and diligence may retrieve, for the wounds of the soul religion provides a healing balm, and the immedicable ills of the present life have the consolatory promise of abundant compensation in the life to come; but to build for eternity upon the shifting sands—to find the frail pleasure-bark at last circling in the gyrations of the whirlpool—to see the light in which we have so long trusted going out in the gathering gloom of a night that knows no morning—this is too frightful for a Christian's contemplation. Ah! how many on this very rock have wrecked immortal hopes! Failing to discriminate between the true evidence of Christian character and the false criteria which have misled multitudes in the estimate of their spiritual state, they have involved themselves in practical errors inevitably resulting in a moral ruin too vast for human thought to compass or conceive. "This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation."

XX.

Seventeenth Day of Lent.

HUMANITARIANISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, A.M.

Having your loins girt about with truth. — EPH. vi. 14.

ONE of the most hopeful signs of the present day is the change which has come over the minds of the world's sceptics and atheists. The scoffing tone of the old assailers of Christianity is not upon the lips of the doubters of to-day. Their very doubt is passing through a reverent phase. Their scepticism may be spoken of as an attitude of earnest inquiry. A more humane, a more gentle spirit, pervades all their utterances. The leavening influence of Christianity has at length worked its way to the very centre of the realm of doubt and disbelief. The men to whom Christian belief is an impossibility, and to whom the faith which renders the devout Christian so vividly conscious of the realities of the unseen world is utterly unknown, are beginning to confess that the heart of man is ever yearning for an object of worship. They have of late been rearing up in their midst what they call a religion, and devoting themselves to what they call a worship, — the religion of humanity; the worship of humanity. Let us compare their religion with Christianity, their worship with that of Christians.

They, by the religion of humanity, mean the prolonged contemplation of all that is noble and heroic in the life of humanity in the past. They assert — and with some truth — that it is not possible for the human mind to form any conception of humanity more exalted than that which may be gathered from a diligent study of human history in the past. The virtues that we call godlike, — how comes it that we have any idea of them? They say, because we have noted them in the lives of the men who have been. Attainments that we call heroic, — we have no notion of any, say they, but what we find recorded in the history of the past. Our notions of self-sacrifice, of devotion to the good of others, of a life of love, of charity divine, are, they assert, existing in us simply because the lives of the men and women of past times present us with instances of such. In order that what has been in the past may be prolonged into the future; in order that human history may, in the future, write itself in lines as glowing as those which flash to us through the darkness of the past, — let us, they say, keep ever before us the contemplation of the noblest achievements, the divinest thoughts, the deeds of tenderest devotion, which past history can present to us; let us pay to the memories of those whose influence upon the men of their own days was most exalting, or the story of whose lives has stirred to noblest feelings the heart of succeeding generations, let us pay to them the highest honor possible for us to render to them; let us reverence them; let us worship them; let the thoughts of the living be directed towards those who are no more seen, in a solemn union; and let

us call our united offering of adoration and praise the worship of humanity.

In this religion of humanity, the thoughts of the living are directed both towards the past and towards the future. The past is contemplated, and the noblest souls of the past are worshipped, in order that the continuity of the highest life of humanity may be preserved ; in order that the future may be worthy of the past, may be in accord with it ; in order that what has been realized once may be realized again. But let us, my friends, look more closely into the past of our humanitarian brethren ; let us dwell upon their future. Alas ! there is nothing more for us to contemplate. In the past and in the future, there is no God presented to our thoughts. There is no immortality for the souls of our forefathers. When their bodies returned to dust, nothing more lingered behind than their memories. All their aspirations unrealized on this earth, all their endeavors hindered from being worked out here, all their noble sorrows, all their hopes in a future of endless growth in wisdom and love, were stifled in the dust of the grave. After all, — such is the sad confession of these brethren of ours, — the old symbols which Christianity caused to disappear were the right ones. The shattered column, and the inverted torch, — these are really, according to the new humanitarian notions, true types of the death which brings life to an abrupt close, and quenches the longings of the spirit of man. The past and the future have no other arena for human endeavor than the visible world. In the future there will simply be a succession of generations repeating the efforts of their

forefathers, and preserving the remembrances of their thoughts and deeds. And, than this existence in the memories of the men and women of the future, there is no other immortality for the human soul. They who accept this hopeless gospel of latter days have to think of the human spirit entering upon the sleep of annihilation. There is no future life in which the mysteries which surround us here will be gradually unfolded to the eager souls of men. And in the present and the past there has been no divine aid for humanity in its strivings after a higher life, in its passionate searchings after truth. Its existence in the past has been one of utter isolation; and in the future the same loneliness is in store for it,—loneliness followed by the unbroken silence of annihilation.

Hopeless and sad as is this view of human life and human destiny, its adherents adopt a tone far different from the scoffing one indulged in by the sceptics of former days. Sad and hopeless as it is, it has elements of nobleness within it. But these redeeming elements are in reality borrowed from the Christianity to which it offers its silent protest. My friends, the Christianity in which we find the hopes which sustain us along the path of life, and which will be our solace as death approaches, has inshrined within it that reverence for the past life of humanity which justifies us in recognizing in the humanitarianism of to-day a higher tone than that which animated the scepticism of former times. We in our religion are encouraged to look back upon the past, with reverent feelings, to keep alive in our hearts the remembrance of the heroism and the devotion of our forefathers. But

the life of humanity in the past, which we contemplate, is a life divinely aided. "God's dealings with his children in the past," is a phrase we are often dwelling upon. "The noble works that thou, O God, didst in the days of our fathers, and in the old times before them;" these are words which are uttered in your hearing Sunday after Sunday. The literature which reveals to us the doings of God to his people in the far-away past is preserved by us with a reverence which we could not bestow upon it, were it less than divine. We call it "revelation," because it discloses to us the purposes of God towards a world whose redemption and sanctification are ever in his thoughts. We call it "inspired," because we believe in human souls receiving divine aid. We call it "the word of God," because we are possessed by the thought that in God we all live and move and have our being, and that the highest thoughts of men are but an outflow from the thoughts of God. The Bible, the book which we treasure as the Book of books, will be to us an ever-present witness of the sanctity of the life of humanity in the past. The Bible will ever give to us this divine teaching, that through all times God is present in the world, manifesting his divine purposes in the history of the nations, aiding men in all their earnest strivings after truth, revealing to reverent workers the mysteries of creation, and enabling the thoughts of men to grow in all divine knowledge.

The very word "humanity," which is often uttered by the adherents of the modern religion of hopelessness, implies the contemplation of an ideal man, embodying the excellences of all actual men. Such an ideal creation of

the human mind, we, of course, shall do ourselves no harm by dwelling upon ; but our Christian religion brings before us unceasingly the contemplation and worship of a Divine Man, not the ideal of the mind which the humanitarians have set up, but the real man Christ Jesus, with whom also the Divine is in mystic union. The mind may dwell upon the thought of an ideal man, as it may dwell upon any other poetic fancy. But the Jesus we contemplate and adore is no fanciful creation. He is a real man. He has lived on earth the life of a brother. He has entered into conscious sympathy with all the suffering that man in this life can be subject to. In his sacred person, the Divine entered into union with the human. What a godlike significance does the thought of this union impart to human life ! God himself felt the need of becoming incarnate so that he might enter into tender, quivering sympathy with his own creatures, and manifest his love towards them. We as Christians have, then, no ideal man for our thoughts to be content with idly musing on : we have this real Divine Man, of whose historic existence we can have no manner of doubt, and whose advent into the world has altered the whole course of human history. In the union of the Divine with the human in him, we are able to read the assurance of the possibility of our own present and future union with the Divine, — the assurance of the reception of a redeemed humanity into union with God.

There is not a single one of the notions which has found a home in the religion which fails to recognize the immortality of the human soul, which does not exist in a

glorified form in the Christianity in which we find the God of our forefathers and the Saviour of the world.

Our forefathers, — what has humanitarianism to tell us of them consolatory to the human spirit? All that is left of them, it says, is the dust beneath our feet, and the remembrances of them that we may happen to cherish. With what hopes does our Christian religion inspire us? It inspires us with the blessed hope of immortality for our forefathers and for ourselves. It teaches us of the spiritual bodies which we possess now, and which we shall possess, too, in the unseen world towards which we are hastening. It tells us of the union of all the faithful departed in the celestial Church, — their union with one another, and with the Lord. It tells us of a divine humanity, — of a society of the spirits and souls of righteous men in eternal union with the divinely human Jesus. It speaks to us, too, of the communion of saints, of the sweetness and joy which spring from a loving interchange of thought and sympathy with one another on earth, and from our opening our hearts to all the tender messages which the good Lord sends to us by his ministering spirits, the saints in glory, who dwell with him in union, and who with him work to bring about the final redemption of humanity.

These are some of the main aspects of the Christian truth with which our loins should ever be girt. Truth, what is it? is a question which is ever being asked. Christianity inspires us with the hope that the question is one which is ever being answered in this life as we grow in holiness and love, and one which in a future life will

be more fully answered, — one, indeed, the answering of which will be one great feature of the mysterious life to come. That modern system I have been speaking of — the latest expression of the doubt and scepticism of the world ; the humanitarianism, all whose excellences are but the faintest shadows of the divine realities of Christianity ; the system, all who accept which must banish hope from their hearts — tells us there is no answer to such questions ; that we shall never get beyond mere guesses and conjectures ; that the grave to which we are all journeying will hush forever the inquiring spirit, and silence forever the voices of revelation ; that the unseen world to which we all are hastening, some of us with our hearts so eagerly desirous of knowing there something of the mysteries which baffle us here, — to which we as Christians go, so hopefully confident that the revelation commenced here will be continued there, that mysteries of creation will be unveiled to us, that the mystery of evil which lies like a dark shadow across our path in this world will be cleared away, that indeed the whole life during the endless years before us will consist in a continuous growth in wisdom as well as love, — humanitarianism, I say, tells us that the unseen world to which we are going so eagerly and so hopefully is, after all, but a delusion, a world of darkness and annihilation ; and that the human soul has cherished all its passionate desires, all its cravings for truth, in vain.

And yet, as I have said, there are elements of nobleness in this latter-day humanitarianism. Beneath its assumption that the whole life of Christendom has been but

a prolonged delusion, and life and immortality in Christ but an idea with which the human mind has for centuries been dazzled, may be read what may be spoken of as an assertion from the sceptical side, of the divine possibilities existing in human nature. Much that has of late been written by men of humanitarian views involves a recognition of the truth "that through the ages one increasing purpose runs," that the human mind has been gradually gaining a surer grasp of ideas which prompt to nobler action, that the longing for higher culture has been deepening and strengthening itself, and that, as far as the only life to which heed can be given by humanitarians is concerned, men have been living with their loins more resolutely girt, and their lamps more brightly burning; living with more earnestness of aim, and with a keener desire to partake of the heritage of thought bequeathed to them by generations past. But the finer spirits of Christendom are now asserting just as emphatically the like belief in the progressive life of humanity. They are boldly proclaiming their conviction that humanity in all its higher aims is divinely aided; that in every human excellence we may read a verification of the old assertion that God created man in his own image; that, indeed, the higher life of humanity — its strivings after wisdom, its self-sacrificing love — is a continuous revelation to the world of the Divine, whose union with the human in Christ is the foreshadowing of the final union of the Divine with humanity redeemed and sanctified. In the Christian system, as it is expounded by the most catholic-hearted divines of the day, the fullest recognition is given

of the essential divineness of the drama of human history and civilization.

O my friends ! let us cling to the faith of our fathers. Let us cherish all the hopes that have sprung up within the human breast since the teachings of Christ began to spread through the world. Let us cling fast to our hopes of immortality. Let us live ever conscious that we bear within us, each of us, an immortal spirit ; that the Lord of heaven and earth has access to our spiritual natures by means of his own Divine Spirit ; that the search for divine truth is not a hopeless one ; that by a life of love, and of resignation to the divine will, we shall so grow into union with the Divine as to be prepared to receive the whisperings of divine wisdom, and to enter upon that growth in divine knowledge, in heavenly truth, which shall be continued in the endless life upon which all our hopes are fixed.

XXI.

Eighteenth Day of Lent.

PERMANENCE OF LOVE.

REV. EX-CHANCELLOR LIPSCOMB, LL.D.

Charity never faileth. — I COR. xiii. 8.

WHY is it that the numerous objects around us are transient ? On every side they appeal to us, connect themselves with hope and fear, enter into our business,

awaken enterprise and ambition, and even inspire ardent love ; yet they are ever passing away. Now, there must be a discipline in all this, and Christianity assures us what it means. It is that we may be trained, in the midst of evanescence, for that which is permanent. And this presupposes that there is not only an immortal soul in man, but that, by reason of his present organization and its relations, certain of his functions and acquirements are purely temporary, while others are to live forever. In fact, there are functions and acquirements which do not wait for the death of the body. They fulfil their purpose and expire long before age overtakes us. Yet, says Wordsworth, —

“Not for this

Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur : other gifts
Have followed, for such loss, I would believe
Abundant recompense.”

It is in the spirit of a true and noble Christian philosophy that this great moral poet of the century sees no cause to “mourn nor murmur,” because our nature has a *rejecting instinct*, which, as God ordains, throws off and leaves behind it tastes and habits that were once very useful as well as precious. Keeping in mind, then, that this rejecting instinct is an organic part of our constitution, and has its allotted functions to discharge, we can appreciate all the more St. Paul’s line of thought in the closing verses of this chapter. “*Love never faileth.*” Its existence, activity, manifestation, will be perpetuated. The wonderful spiritual gifts of which he had said so much, — prophecy, the ability to speak with tongues, knowledge,

—these should cease to exist. Although they proceeded from the Holy Ghost, and were mightily instrumental for good in the incipient work of the Church, yet, nevertheless, they were to terminate. Scaffoldings were they all, useful as such, subserving most important ends, but mere scaffoldings, that could no longer remain when the edifice had been finished.

What, then, is the ideal of the Church? It is not splendid endowments, for they are doomed to extinction; but the love “that never faileth.” Whether the passing away of these gifts refers to the apostolic age, or to “the age to come,” matters nothing; since the idea of their discontinuation, rather than of the time it should occur, is foremost in St. Paul’s mind. Imagine, then, his conception of love, when he could contemplate the Church as a vast body laying off these mighty accompaniments of its career, and yet, so far from being weakened, would be girded afresh with a power more resplendent, and display it in a form infinitely more majestic. Disrobed of these habiliments, its contour would appear in the perfection of sublimity; its anatomy as an organism would be, as it were, transparent; the whole framework, the various parts, the ligaments binding them together, the circulating life-blood, would disclose the single animating principle of love.

Would it startle the Corinthians to learn that even knowledge should vanish away? “We know in part, and we prophesy in part.” All knowledge cannot be meant; for love itself includes much knowledge, and, in its absence, would be simply emotional intensity. To possess

the mere faculty of knowing, would be worthless, if the mind could not retain the contents of knowledge, and make them a portion integrally of itself. What the apostle teaches is that such knowledge as stands related to the present state and time, and grows directly out of imperfect human development, and shares the condition of all things earthly, is short-lived, and must terminate. Tongues shall cease, but the gift of speech shall not be lost. And he explains himself by saying that the gifts relating to prophecy and tongues were only partial, were exclusively adapted to a preliminary state of experience and activity, and completed their purpose in a temporary spiritual economy. We are here under specific, no less than general limitations, and in certain directions we are restrained more than in others. What the Spirit looks to is not knowledge alone, but to its moral aspects as well ; to humility, meekness, self-abasement, when the intellect is strongest, freest, and boldest ; nor will he expand the understanding and its expressional force for their own sakes, but develop them only so far as subservient to an object higher than their immediate ends. Partial information, partial command of our mental faculties, partial uses of even the wisdom we possess, — this is the law of limitation and restraint, under which the complex probation of intellect, sensibility, volition, aspiration, and outward activity, works out immeasurable results. Therefore, he argues, we now know and prophesy “in part ;” at the best, we are fragmentary and incomplete : and yet this imperfection is connected with a perfect system, and leads up to it. The perfection will come ; the existing economy

is its foreshadowing ; nor could knowledge give any rational account of itself, nor could prophecy and tongues vindicate their worth, if the fuller splendors, of which these are faint escapes of light, were not absolute certainties of the future. Only when the "perfect is come," shall that which is "in part" be "done away." Institutions founded in providence, and upheld by the Spirit, are left to no chance or accident as to continuance, decay, extinction. God comes into them, abides, departs, according to the counsel of his will. If he numbers our days as living men, and keeps our times in his hand ; if only his voice says, "Return, ye children of men," — this is equally true of institutions. For the dead dust, man makes a grave ; but the life of individuals, institutions, government, society, even the Church, is in God's keeping, and he alone says, "Return."

How shall St. Paul set forth the relation of the partial to the perfect ? A truth lacks something if it cannot be illustrated, and a teacher is very defective in ability when he cannot find a resemblance or an analogy to make his meaning more perspicuous and vivid. Truth and teacher have met in this magnificent chapter, on ground reserved, we may venture to say, for their special occupancy and companionship. The great teacher sees the sublimest of truths in a glowing light, and most unlike Paul would he be if no illustration came to hand spontaneously. Is there something in the more hallowed moments of the soul that suddenly re-instates the sense of childhood ? "When I was a child," in the heathen city of Tarsus, the capital of a Roman province ; the mountains of Taurus

and the luxuriant plain and the flowing Cydnus near by; the crowded streets and gay population and excited groups of talkers pressing on eye and ear; the festivals of paganism, the strange contrasts of these with the life in his Jewish home; his training under the parental roof; the daily reminders of the law, and the traditions of the Pharisees, — what thoughts were they? Only those of a child, understood and spoken as a child. No ordinary child could he have been. Providence was shaping him then for an apostle, so that while the holy Child Jesus was growing “in wisdom and stature” amid the hills of Nazareth and in the nursery of the Virgin Mother’s heart there was far away in Cilicia a boy not much younger, who was in rearing there, under very unlike circumstances, to be his chosen apostle to the Gentile world. Yet the boy Saul was but a child, and thought and spake “as a child.” But is childhood disallowed and set off in sharp contrast with manhood? Nay: childhood is of God no less than manhood, as to quality of being. What is contrasted is the *childishness* in the one case, and the perfected *manhood* in the other. So that we suppose the apostle to mean that whatsoever is initial, immature, provisional, in the child, has been put away to make room for something better. The better implies the good, — a *childish* good indeed, and yet a good from the hand of God, however mixed with earthly imperfections.

Another movement occurs in the leading thought. Can one think of knowledge without an involuntary recurrence of the symbol of light? The symbol has quite supplanted the thing signified, and the *enlightened* man is more hon-

ored than the *knowing* man. St. Paul proceeds to say, "Now we see through a glass, darkly;" the revealed Word of God is conveyed to us "in symbols and words which but imperfectly express them" (Hodge, Delitzsch); and yet, while there is a "glass" or mirror, and the knowledge or vision of divine things is "darkly" given, there is a real knowledge, a true and blessed knowledge, for "we see." Enough is made intelligible for all the purposes of the spiritual mind, for all spiritual uses, in all spiritual relationships of comprehension, conscience, volition, affection, brotherhood; enough for probation, responsibility, culture, and life-time growth. What in us is denied? Only curiosity, excessive appetencies of the faculties, habits of perception and judging superinduced in the intellect by the sensational portion of our nature, — these are denied their morbid gratification. A *plethora* of *evidence* is denied, that faith may have its sphere. Over-strength and over-constraint of *motive* are denied, that the will may be left free. Violent impulses of *feeling* are denied, that the heart may be intense without wild and erratic enthusiasm, treasuring its life of peaceful blessedness in unfathomable depths like the ocean, that keeps its mass of waters in the vast hollows of the globe and uses the hills and mountains only to shape its shores. On the other hand, what is granted to the mind in the revelation of divine truth? Such views of God in Christ as the soul can realize in its present condition, and thereby form the one master-habit of a probationary being, viz., *How to see God in Christ*. At present, we can only begin to see as by reflection in a mirror; and as, in the

education of the senses to the finer work of earthly life, the cultivation of the eye is the slowest and most exacting, the longest, the most difficult, and that too because the eye is the noblest of the special senses, so learn we, and not without much patient exertion, and oft-repeated efforts, to see God in Christ as made known in his gospel and providence and Holy Spirit. Yet the mirror trains the eye, and prepares it to see God through no such intervening medium. The promised vision is open, full, immediate. We shall see him "*face to face*," says St. Paul. "We shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is," declares St. John. And then partial knowledge shall expand into perfect knowledge, and we shall know after a new and divine manner, for nothing less than this is the assurance, *know as we are known*.

"Glorious hymn to *Christian love*," as Dr. Farrar calls this chapter, what shall be its closing strain? "And now abideth" (remains or continues), — the same duration as compared with the evanescence of extraordinary gifts being ascribed to the three, — "and now abideth faith, hope, love, these three ; and the greatest of these is love." Who can doubt it after reading this chapter? Here it stands beside the great gifts of the "tongues of men and of angels," and of the prophetic insight, and of miracle-working, and of philanthropy and martyrdom ; and, amid this splendid array, *love is greatest*. In what it does, it is *greatest*. In what it is, it is *greatest*. Here, finally, it is grouped with faith and hope, and yet the light that irradiates its form and features from the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is a lustre beyond that of the other two, because the "greatest of these is love."

XXII.

Nineteenth Day of Lent.

SOJOURNING WITH GOD.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

Ye are strangers and sojourners with me. — LEV. xxv. 23.

THE chosen people are about to take possession of the promised land, and God is instructing them concerning their polity and conduct in their new home and relations. One of the specific directions given them is, that they are not to sell the land forever, because it belongs to him, and they are his wards — tenants at will, dwelling on his domain, under his patronage and protection. For six years he leased to them the land, so to say; but every seventh year he reclaimed it as his own, and it was to be neither tilled nor sown; and after seven such sabbatic years, in the fiftieth year, which was the year of jubilee, every thing reverted with a still more special emphasis to the Divine Proprietor; and the people were not permitted to reap or gather any thing that grew of itself that year even from the unworked soil, but were to subsist on the product of the former years laid up in store for that purpose. All this to teach them that the domain was Jehovah's, and they were only privileged occupants under him — that he was their patron, protector, benefactor, while they were strangers and sojourners with God.

In a general sense, these sacred words describe the condition of all men. All live by sufferance on the Lord's estate, fed and sustained by his bounty. Whether we recognize his rights and claims or not, all we have belongs to him, and the continuance of every privilege depends upon his will. You may revolt against his authority, and fret at what you call fate; but his providence orders all, and death is only your eviction from the trust and tenure you have abused. What is your life, and what control has any man over his destiny? A shadow on the ground, a vapor in the air, an arrow speeding to the mark, an eagle hasting to the prey, a post hurrying past with despatches, a swift ship gliding out of sight over the misty horizon — these are the Scripture emblems of what we are. Every day is but a new stage in the pilgrim's progress — every act and every pulse another step toward the tomb. The frequent changes of fortune teach us that nothing here is certain but uncertainty, nothing constant but inconstancy, nothing real but unreality, nothing stable but instability. The loveliest spot we ever found on earth is but a halting-place for the traveller — an oasis for the caravan in the desert. The world itself, and all that it contains, present only the successive scenes of a moving panorama; and our life is the passage of a weaver's shuttle — a flying to and fro — a mere coming and going — an entry and an exit. For we are strangers and sojourners with God.

But what is in a general sense thus true of all, is in a special sense true of the spiritual and heavenly-minded.

As Abraham was a stranger and a sojourner with the Canaanite and the Egyptian — as Jacob and his sons were strangers and sojourners with Pharaoh, and the fugitive David with the king of Gath — so all godly people acknowledge themselves strangers and sojourners with God. This is the picture of the Christian life that better than almost any other expresses the condition and experiences of our Lord's faithful followers — not at home here — ever on the move — living among aliens and enemies — subject to many privations and occasional persecutions — every morning hearing afresh the summons, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest" — practically confessing, with patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." The world knew not their Master, and knows not them. If they were of the world, the world would love its own; because they are not of the world, but he has chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them. Wholly of another character — another profession — another pursuit — aiming at other ends, and cheered by other hopes — the carnal, selfish, unbelieving world cannot possibly appreciate them, and they are constantly misunderstood and misrepresented by the world. Regarding not the things which are seen and temporal, but the things which are unseen and eternal, they are often stigmatized as fools and denounced as fanatics. Far distant from their home, and surrounded by those who have no sympathy with them, they show their heavenly citizenship by heavenly tempers, heavenly manners, heavenly conversation, all hallowed by the spirit of holiness. So

one of the Fathers in the second century describes the Christians of his time :

“They occupy their own native land, but as pilgrims in it. They bear all as citizens, and forbear all as foreigners. Every foreign land is to them a fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign. They are in the flesh, but they walk not after the flesh. They live on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They die, but with death their true life begins. Poor themselves, they make many rich ; destitute, they have all things in abundance ; despised, they are glorified in contempt. In a word — what the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world. The soul inhabits the body, but is not derived from it ; and Christians dwell in the world, but are not of it. The immortal soul sojourns in a mortal tent ; and Christians inhabit a perishable house, while looking for an imperishable in heaven.”

To such heavenly-mindedness, my dear brethren, we all are called ; and without something of this spirit, whatever our professions and formalities, we do but belie the name of Christian. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God ; set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth ; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God ; when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.”

Bowed down with many a burden, and weary because of the way, how much is there to cheer and comfort us

in God's good word to his suffering pilgrims — "Ye are strangers and sojourners with me" !

There is the idea of friendly recognition. As the nomad chief receives the tourist into his tent, and assures him of his favor by the "covenant of salt;" so God hath made with us an everlasting covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure; since which, he can never disown us, never forsake us, never forget us, never cease to care for his own.

There is the idea of pleasant communion. As in the Arab tent, between the sheik and his guest, there is a free interchange of thought and feeling; so between God and the regenerate soul a sweet fellowship is established, with perfect access and unreserved confidence. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," and his delight is in his saints, who are the excellent of the earth.

There is the idea of needful refreshment. "Turn in and rest a little," saith the patriarch to the wayfarers; and then brings forth bread and wine — the best that his store affords — to cheer their spirits and revive their strength. God spreads a table for his people in the wilderness. With angels' food he feeds them, and their cup runs over with blessing. He gives them to eat of the hidden manna, and restores their fainting souls with the new wine of the kingdom.

There is the idea of faithful protection. The Arab who has eaten with you will answer for your safety with his own life, and so long as you remain with him none of his tribe shall harm a hair of your head. Believer in

Jesus ! do you not dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty? Has he not shut you, like Noah, into the ark of your salvation? Is not David's rock your rock, your fortress, your high tower, and unfailing city of refuge?

There is the idea of infallible guidance. The Oriental host will not permit his guest to set forth alone, but goes with him on every new track, grasps his hand in every steep ascent, and holds him back from the brink of every precipice. God said to Israel: "I will send my angel before thy face, to lead thee in the way, and bring thee into the land whither thou goest." Yea, he said more: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Both promises are ours, my brethren; and something better than the pillar of cloud and fire, or the manifest glory of the resident God upon the mercy-seat, marches in the van of his pilgrim host through the wilderness, and will never leave us till the last member of his redeemed Israel shall have passed clean over Jordan!

There is the idea of a blessed destiny. Their divine Guide is leading them "to a good land, that floweth with milk and honey" — "to a city of habitation" — "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," — "a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens," — the Father's house of "many mansions," where Christ is now as he promised preparing a place for his people, and where they are at last to be with him and behold his glory. Oh! with what a sweet and restful confidence should we dismiss our groundless fears of the future, saying with the Psalmist — "Thou shalt

guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory!" The pilgrim has a home; the weary has a resting-place; the wanderer in the wilderness is a "fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of faith;" and often have we seen him in the evening twilight, after a long day's march over stony mountain and sultry plain, sitting at the door of the tent just pitched for the night, with calm voice singing:

"One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er —
I'm nearer to my home to-night
Than e'er I was before —
Nearer the bound of life,
Where falls my burden down —
Nearer to where I leave my cross,
And where I take my crown!"

and with the next rising sun, like a giant refreshed with new wine, joyfully resuming his journey, from the first eminence attained gazing a moment through his glass at the distant glory of the gold-and-crystal city, then bounding forward, and making the mountains ring with the strain:

"There is my house and portion fair,
My treasure and my heart are there,
And my abiding home;
For me my elder brethren stay,
And angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come!"

The saintly Monica, after many years of weeping at the nail-pierced feet, has at length received the answer to her prayers in the conversion of one dearer to her

than life ; and is now ready, with good old Simeon, to depart in peace, having seen the salvation of the Lord : “ As for me, my son, nothing in this world hath longer any charm for me. What I do here, or why I should remain, I know not. But one wish I had, and that God has abundantly granted me. Bury me where thou wilt, for nowhere am I far from God.”

Dark to some of you, O ye strangers and sojourners with God ! may be the valley of the shadow of death ; but ye cannot perish there, for He whose fellowship is immortality is still with you, and you shall soon be with him as never before ! Black and cold at your feet rolls the river of terrors ; but lift your eyes a little, and you see gleaming through the mist the pearl-gates beyond ! There “ the Captain of the Lord’s host ” is already preparing your escort !

“ Even now is at hand
The angelical band —
The convoy attends —
An invincible troop of invisible friends !
Ready winged for their flight
To the regions of light,
The horses are come —
The chariots of Israel to carry us home ! ”

XXIII.

Twentieth Day of Lent.

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

REV. F. C. EWER, S.T.D.

Follow me. — MATT. xvi. 24.

FITTING words for meditation for those who are trying to walk in the conformativ way that belongs to Mid-Lent ; who, having considered and repented of their sins, look to Jesus that they may catch somewhat of the spirit of his character, and conform their own lives to it, — “Follow me.”

We are so familiar from earliest childhood with the facts of Jesus' life, and with his sayings, that it is difficult for us to realize their grandeur and beauty. Something exceptional affects us more than something vastly more sublime. This is of daily occurrence ; we are more amazed at a meteor than at the mighty ceaseless floods of light outpouring everywhere from the sun. And the preacher's task is the most difficult of human work. The journalist cannot keep up public interest in an event beyond a week or two ; he is but a follower of public interest, not a creator of it. The orator only speaks occasionally on some new burning theme. But the preacher's exceptional task is to take the thousand-told tale, and tell it over again ; to create interest in that which

is utterly familiar ; to put freshness into the stale, and to iterate and re-iterate his task year after year. The wonder is not that so many fail, but that all do not. Help the preacher, then, yourselves. Jesus says, "Follow me."

Take those two words, and think upon them. Is there anybody in earnest here? If so, will you, my people, do one thing for me this week every day, — nay, one thing for yourselves, — take these two words three times each day, at morning, noon, and night, and think on them for the space of a minute each time?

I wish to put three thoughts unto your minds. And the first is this : Christianity is a human being.

Spinoza conceived of and described pantheism. Though false, as a mere intellectual effort it was grand. If the works containing the system had been published anonymously, and Spinoza had died and his name had remained unknown, we should have lost nothing, — we should have had the system entire. The great question with ancient intelligence was how to secure happiness and successful existence as creatures, — whether we should live according to the highest exercise of reason, or the best exercise of the affections or of the will. Plato conceived a grand philosophy of life based on reason ; Zeno, a grand system based on the will ; Epicurus, a grand system based on the best exercise of the affections. They were all three noble schemes. But if the systems alone had come down to us, and their authors had sunk into forgetfulness, the systems would not have been marred. Each can exist separate from its creator, and stand complete in itself. But it is not so with Christianity. There is no Christianity with-

out Christ. He is its inner energy. He is the thing we see through his teachings. His character, his purity, his meekness, — we cannot see and feel and realize his teachings separate from himself. He is Christianity. Christianity is a human being. We can understand the Stoic philosophy, the Peripatetic, and the philosophy of the Academy, without Zeno or Aristotle or Plato ; but we cannot understand Christianity without understanding Christ. We can practise the inductive philosophy without possessing one particle of the abject meanness or despicable characteristics of Lord Bacon ; but one cannot be a Christian by merely believing in Christian doctrines, one cannot be a Christian without possessing the spirit of Christ.

But you will say, Christ, though possessing human nature, was not personally human. In person he was divine, — the Son of God, God the Son, God himself. I can understand a man, but do you tell me I cannot understand Christianity without understanding Christ? How can I comprehend God? Indeed it is true that he stands before us clothed in consummate dignity. But I venture to say, — and this is the second thought I give you, — that, if Jesus be God, God then is more easily comprehended than man. In the first place, women are often an enigma to men, and I suppose that men are equally an enigma to women. And it is very certain that men are often an enigma to each other. There is a great deal of good in every man and every woman, and there is a great deal of bad in every man and every woman ; and so it follows that all our acts and words lie rooted back in a very complicated soil of mixed motives. And

it is the most difficult of all things to read each other thoroughly on this account. But Jesus Christ was without sin. And there is nothing so transparent as singleness of purpose, and truth, and purity, and meekness, and bravery, and honesty, and unselfishness. Sincerity is perfectly intelligible. And there is no man living, or that ever has lived, so easily comprehended as Jesus Christ.

Thus if Christianity is to be accepted, and if there is no Christianity without Christ, if he is its heart and soul and nucleus and life — if it is a mere empty shell without him, then he and his character all being transparent are calculated to take hold on all grades of life, philosopher and herd, prince and peasant, ancient and modern, barbarian and enlightened. “Follow me.” But you will say, I can follow some man who is a little better than I am. But Jesus Christ was perfect, — he was God. Very well, then; and this is the third thought that I would suggest to you. We were made to be like God. There are, it is true, grades of creatures in existence. It were useless for the stone to strive to be like the tree, or the tree to strive to be like the lion. And though there be the distinct grades of men, angels, archangels, cherubim, and even God, yet mind, intelligence, all belongs to one family. Affection is the same all the way up. If I love, it may be infinitely little in comparison with God’s love, but it is a drop out of the same ocean. If I have a sense of justice, if I have a feeling of mercy, or do an act of forgiveness, it is the same in quality all the way up to God. I do not belong alone to the human family; I belong to the one great family of intelligence which includes even

God himself; I am made in the image of God, and there is nothing in Jesus Christ of which we have not springs and principles in ourselves. And God speaks to us, "Follow me!"

Nor could we follow him, were it not that you were made capable of indefinite expansion, endless unfolding and development. Alas! indefinite expansion downward as well as upward! If we look down at that unfolding in sin and misery, for ever and ever — Oh, close the great doors upon the scene! But when we look up — Ah! what is expansion? A tree, a seed. Now, when I add the factor of infinity to the developing, my mind refuses to take in the thought: but I begin to comprehend the design of my being; a great hope is born within me; and I begin, too, to understand what God means when he lovingly bends to me, and whispers the words to my deepest soul, "Follow thou me!"

XXIV.

Twenty-first Day of Lent.

THE CARNAL MIND.

REV. J. W. PARKER, A.M.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. — ROM. viii. 7, 8.

WE are taught by the Apostle St. Paul in this passage, that there is between the carnal mind and God an irrec-

oncilable enmity. How needful, then, is it for all who wish to be not at enmity but at peace with God, to know what the apostle means by the carnal mind! It would be a worthy employment of Lent, to try to understand what is meant by a carnal mind, that we may more effectually, both now and at all times, guard ourselves against it. We may learn, perhaps, thus better to understand why there should be such a season as Lent, and to what practical uses we may turn our Lenten devotions and observances.

We may be able thereby to gain a more thorough conviction how entirely God would have us to belong to himself, when we understand that it is not what we do alone in outward action that he would control, but that it is our mind which he would have to be one with his mind. We shall begin to see that even all triumphs over special temptations, in which we give evidence of a desire so far of pleasing God, must yet not be altogether depended upon. They must be used as encouragements indeed to persevere in the work of completely subjecting our minds to the mind of God, not complacently regarded as proofs that we have already accomplished this subjection. We have to remember that we are, and shall be till death, upon our trial what we shall admire, love, earnestly long for, will to do, and actually do. We have to choose, not merely once for all, but day by day, what shall be the prevailing motive in our actions. It is what St. Paul here calls the "mind," which is called upon to undergo this trial and to make this choice. The carnal mind chooses in one way, the spiritual mind chooses in

another. Are we then, we ought to be repeatedly asking ourselves, doing our utmost that the *mind* which is within us should be not carnal, but spiritual? Are we making the mistake of striving to please God without giving ourselves the trouble to know what is the real bent of the mind which is in us? Would it not be well to be strict and severe in our self-questioning, when there is an evident possibility of such mistake, when we may be presuming that we are pleasing God, but the mind which is in us may be a carnal mind, and so be at enmity with him?

There does not appear to be any doubt as to the apostle's meaning when he speaks of the carnal mind. He cannot mean any other than a "mind" guided and determined by "carnal" or fleshly influences; a "mind" which does not recognize the duty of commanding and restraining all impulses of the "flesh," and becomes, instead of a ruler, a slave; a "mind" which may lead those whom it possesses into all shameful excesses and wickednesses; a "mind" which, in pursuing its own lawless cravings, ceases to recognize its own dignity, much less the heavenly calling which God has set forth as the true end of all man's desires.

But yet there is in the apostle's words what may suggest doubt if they be not carefully weighed: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God." But the apostle adds, "neither indeed can be." And again, as if to give increased emphasis to his words, he adds, "So they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Now, it is plain that if we attach one meaning to these words, — which indeed they might possibly bear, taken alone, — there is an end to our consideration of this subject ; that is, if the apostle meant that the carnal mind could not (in any way) become subject to the law of God, or that they that are in the flesh could not (in any way) learn to please God, there could be no practical inferences as to conduct drawn from his words. No man can fight against impossibilities. No one would attempt to alter his way of life, and to change his mind from too great an attachment to the things of sense, if at the outset he were assured that it was impossible to succeed. Men so enslaved to the things of sense are too ready to urge for their own excuse, that they *cannot* change, so that it would seem quite contrary to the apostle's design to uphold this excuse ; yea, even to *suggest* it.

The meaning of the apostle may, then, safely be said not to be, that in no way can the carnal mind become subject to the law of God ; for it *can* truly become subject to that law, by ceasing to be a carnal mind, and so becoming a spiritual mind. They, again, who are *in* the flesh, and while so *in it* are unable to please God, may yet find a way, short of self-destruction, not to be *in* the flesh, and thus learn how to please him. It is the way of the mortification of all evil desires of the flesh, so that they should no longer assume the mastery, and decide what shall be the tone and character of a man's life and actions. This is forcibly put by St. Paul in this same part of his Epistle to the Romans : " Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after

the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

From these words, then, we learn very distinctly that there is no impossibility in the work of destroying the carnal mind within us ; but, nevertheless, that the task is one of great difficulty, and only not impossible because the work is God's work, the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Though that work is done with, and not without and against, man's will, yet does it still remain no less God's work. Where the difficulty lies is the reluctance of man's will so to work with God, the struggle of the carnal mind within against annihilation ; that state which is so forcibly described by the apostle in the seventh chapter of this epistle, and in which there may be a full acknowledgment of what is right, but an inability to do it. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man : but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

This is why too often unhappy men who have fallen under the temptations of strong drink find the struggle too much for them. They cannot resist. They cannot even exert their will to seek by prayer for God's strength to help their weakness. They can do nothing but yield to the evil habit which is dragging them to destruction in body and soul. The carnal mind is a ruling principle, fighting against God within their souls, and even against their will they must needs obey.

What, again, is it but this carnal mind which persuades

so many to forget God? Sins of the shameful sort may be shunned, but yet God is not remembered. It would seem that the fear of being committed to the performance of unwelcome duties keeps away numbers from God. When I say, keeps them away from God, do not let me be misunderstood as saying or implying that men can really keep away from him, or escape from obligations by resolving not to own them. They cannot do this, but they can deceive themselves into believing that they can; and this is what the carnal mind is constantly persuading them to do. They can, through sloth and indifference, put away God from their thoughts. They can systematically shun God's house, and never pray to God even when they are alone in their chambers. They can be also a fearful hinderance to those about them, wife and children, and all who are any way influenced by them; tempting them, if not by their words, yet by their example, to forget God. Children sometimes become better than their parents; but, sadly too often, they become worse. They contract bad habits before they know the sin of what they are doing. They run into dangerous circumstances and situations, with no warning voice from father or mother; or, if they are warned by them, how are the warnings given enfeebled by this fatal defect! They are not the warnings of those who show by their own words and actions that they themselves are at least trying to do their duty to God and their neighbor: they are but the words of those who advise others to do what they themselves studiously refrain from doing.

If, then, it be true that results so evil ensue upon

leaving what St. Paul calls "the carnal mind" to prevail over us, it is but reasonable that we should strive to use all approved means to counteract those evils, and to convert that carnal mind into a spiritual mind.

Consider, then, are there any more reasonable means than those which are plainly set before us in Holy Scripture? If St. Paul is not mistaken, the "mind" that should be spiritual becomes carnal by yielding to the temptations of the flesh. Surely, then, if the flesh must be subdued, it must be subdued by obvious means,—by steadfastly resisting its tendencies towards unlawful indulgences. And the discipline which is needful to correct excess is not to be dispensed with in order to preserve a mastery already won. If St. Paul found it needful to use such discipline, who are we to say that in our case it is not needful? Who are we that should maintain that we can without care and without discipline maintain within a spiritual mind, free from all danger from temptation on the side of our fleshly nature?

If, again, the influence of the carnal mind has manifested itself, not so much in fleshly indulgence as in indifference to religious truth, testified by neglect of God's worship, and a banishment from the mind of all thoughts of eternity, is it an unreasonable remedy to propose some certain, definite, regular acts of worship, and acknowledgment of God? What could be proposed more reasonable? I presume, of course, a belief in God, and a certain feeble desire to own him. Merely to wish or even to *intend* to be better, never in itself makes a man better. There must be action, or all will be of no

avail. We must bring thoughts of God before our minds, the thought of his existence, of his power, of his holiness, and, above all, of his love to us in Christ Jesus our Lord, regularly, and train ourselves to act as if these were truths of infinite moment to us: or otherwise we shall not subdue the carnal mind within; we shall fail of ever attaining that great gift of God, to be *not* carnally but spiritually minded, and so to have life in him. We shall be led inevitably to choose death instead of life, — the never-ending death instead of everlasting life in body and soul. So momentous are the issues which depend upon our choice now. So critical is the condition of those who live as though there were no account to be given how their life is spent!

XXV.

Twenty-second Day of Lent.

NOTHING BUT LEAVES.

REV. H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, A.M.

He found nothing but leaves. — MARK xi. 13.

THE miracles of Jesus were unspoken sermons. Each work of power which he wrought was intended as a lesson for the soul. Thus, when he turned the water into wine at Cana, it was not merely an act of kindness to supply a want: it was a lesson; it taught that "man's extremity is God's opportunity;" and, more, it taught that Jesus

only can change the weakness of our nature into strength. So, when he opened a blind man's eyes, it was not merely an act of mercy to the suffering : it was a lesson teaching all men that Jesus only can open the eyes of those whom sin has blinded, so that they may see their sin, and repent them of the evil. When the dead were raised, his glorious assurance was given that whosoever believeth in Jesus, the resurrection and the life, shall never die. So it is with the miracle recorded in the text. Jesus sees a fig-tree growing by the wayside, and full of leaves ; he draws near, and looks for fruit, and finds none, "nothing but leaves." He curses the fruitless tree, and it withers away. This, we must believe, was a symbolical act, a solemn sermon, for those standing by. In the first instance, the lesson was intended for the Jewish nation. The Jews were full of the leaves of profession ; they were proud of their religious ordinances, their frequent fasts, their long prayers, their sacrifices : but they bore no fruit. There was the gorgeous ceremonial of the temple, its altars smoking with incense, and dripping with the blood of victims ; there was the law, strictly observed and harshly enforced ; and with all this there was no fruit of holiness, of meekness, of gentleness, of love. The wounded traveler lay by the way, and the priest and the Levite passed him by. The Pharisee went up into the temple to pray, and he thanked God that he was better than his neighbor. The Jew gave alms in charity, and called on all men to witness his liberality. In all this there was "nothing but leaves." But that act of Jesus had a yet wider significance : it was a lesson for all time, and for all people ; it

is a lesson for you and for me, warning us of the doom of a fruitless life. As we look back along the path of our life, we see it strewn thickly with blessings. There is the spot where God saved us from a great danger; there is the place where he sent us an unexpected bounty; there is the time when he forgave us our great sin. Look where we may, however rough our path may have been, however closely hedged in by the thorns of trouble, we shall see blessings there, blooming like roses among the thorns. We forget this too often; we forget how unceasing is God's care for us. Every breath which we draw is fraught with danger; disease hangs in the air around us; the germ of death lurks in the water; we cannot mount a horse, or enter a railway-carriage, without incurring a great risk: and yet through all God hath holden us up. Surely "the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance," for what have *we* done to deserve all this?

What have we done for God? There is childhood with its play, there is youth with its dreams, there is manhood with its work: what have we done for God? Ah! in too many cases we see life's pathway strewn with the leaves of wasted opportunities, and neglected chances, and duties left undone.

Some of you have a diary in which you write down the daily events of your life. There you can read a record of that business which you transacted, or the date when you made that money, or lost that money; you can know exactly what you owe to others, and what others owe to you. But where is the entry of what you owe God? You know exactly the year when your crops were abundant;

but do you remember whether you kneeled down, and thanked God for making them so? Whilst you were forgetting him, he was not forgetting you. His hand was stretched out to turn aside that calamity; his hand was there to comfort when the sorrow came. Look into your diary or memorandum-book again. There is your list of engagements for business or pleasure; there is the entry of to-morrow's appointment, of next week's amusement. But is there no entry of that appointment which we must all keep, no warning line to remind us to prepare to meet our God, no line to whisper, "The time is short; what hast thou done? Consider thy ways, for God shall bring every work into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be evil"? We all remember what we have done for ourselves,—how we have made our way in the world: let us try to remember whether we have done any thing for God. Have our lives been fruitful in good works? If you plant a tree, you look for fruit. God has placed us in the world, and he looks for fruit. My brethren, of how many of your lives is the sad record written in heaven, "Nothing but leaves"?

"The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." What do we know of these? Here is a man who calls himself a Christian, who goes to church, who says his prayers, who thinks himself a good man: yet, if you speak to him of a neighbor, his eyes flash; he tells you that he hates him, that he would do any thing to injure him. Yet he calls himself by the name of Him who prayed for his murderers. "Nothing but leaves." Here is

a woman who goes to church, having a gorgeously-bound Prayer-book. She has been calling herself "a miserable sinner" with her lips, but where have her *thoughts* been? Concentrated on a neighbor's dress, or on the last arrival in church. When the general confession was said, when we confessed that we had erred and strayed from God's ways like lost sheep, where were her thoughts then? Hardly with her sins, for she was whispering to a friend, or adjusting her dress. When the absolution for sin was solemnly pronounced, her head was not bowed in penitence: she was thinking of to-morrow's amusement, and so missed the place in her Prayer-book. And yet she will tell you that she came to church to worship God. "Nothing but leaves." Here is a man whom the world calls respectable, who occupies a prominent place in church, to whom people look up as a model of orthodoxy on Sunday. But what of him on Monday? Go forth into the haunts of business, and ask him if the holy words spoken on Sunday are in tune with the words or works of Monday; and you will be forced to echo sadly what the angels are saying sadly in heaven,— "Nothing but leaves."

This is a serious matter for us all. If our lives have hitherto been fruitless in good works, shall we not now ask God of his mercy to pardon the many fruitless years which are gone, and to spare us a little while that we may amend our lives? Shall we not ask him to give us yet another chance before that awful sentence goes forth, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" that we may bring forth the fruit of a holy life to the praise and glory of his holy name?

XXVI.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

MISERICORDIA.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

The Lord is plenteous in mercy. — Ps. ciii. 8.

IN the sacred canticles of the tuneful son of Jesse, how often are we delighted and transported with some strangely beautiful expression, opening to us a new insight of our heavenly Father's heart! David seems to have had larger experience and better appreciation of the Divine mercy than any other man of God's peculiarly favored people; and therefore he was able to celebrate its glories and set forth its mighty achievements in strains surpassing those of all other saints and prophets. Yet even David, when he tunes his harp to this transcendent theme, seems baffled and bewildered amidst the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths, which open before him; and the heavenly inspiration of his muse appears to labor for language and illustration, to convey to others his own impressions of what he feels to be beyond all power of utterance. Take this simple statement: "The Lord is plenteous in mercy."

The term "mercy" is derived from *miser cordia*; a compound of *miserans* — pitying, and *cor* — the heart; or *miseria cordis* — pain of heart. In application to

Jehovah, then, it means the pity—the pain of his heart for the guilty, the helpless, the perishing. In no human language is there a word of richer import. It is sweeter than sympathy, more tender than charity, and lies deeper than the fountain of tears. Yet it is too poor to express the feeling of our heavenly Father toward his earthly offspring. The inspired writers adopt a variety of expedients to heighten its signification. Sometimes they connect an epithet with it, and we read of his “great mercy,” “tender mercy,” “loving mercy,” “abundant mercy,” “everlasting mercy.” Sometimes they couple another term with it, and we have “mercy and grace,” “mercy and truth,” “mercy and goodness,” “mercy and judgment,” “mercy and compassion.” Sometimes they employ the plural form “mercies”—to indicate the frequency, the variety, the endless modifications and adaptations, of this most engaging trait of the Divine character. Then the plural is intensified in the phrase “ manifold mercies,” giving the idea of mercies wrapped up in mercies, a thousand contained in one. At last enumeration is outdone in “the multitude of his mercies”—mercies numberless, thronging upon mercies unnumbered—a host to which the stars of heaven multiplied by all their beams of light could scarcely furnish a competent arithmetic. The apostle calls Jehovah “the God and Father of all mercies,” because he rejoiceth in his mercies as a father in his children; and tells us that “he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him,” because no monarch ever dispensed his bounty so freely; and, though infinite in capacity, “full of mercy”—full as the ocean is of water, as the

atmosphere of light. One of the prophets declares that "he delighteth in mercy" — as if its exercise were his supreme enjoyment; and another exclaims, "Oh! how great is his mercy!" — as if no words were adequate to its expression; while the royal Psalmist sets "his mercy above the heavens," and adorns his sacred lyrics with the frequent refrain — "His mercy endureth forever!"

But none of these forms is more emphatic or more beautiful than this in our text — "plenteous in mercy." A plenty is more than enough. The Divine mercy exceeds human necessity — more than enough for all our sins and sorrows — more than enough for present want and eternal supply. There is an exuberance of mercy, which no language can describe, nor imagination conceive. It speaks in ancient prophecy, glows in the Gospel narrative, teems in the apostolic epistles, encircles with a living halo the manger and the cross, brightens the path of the Church through all her pilgrimage of tears, sprinkles with celestial dew the blessed brow of infancy at the font, spreads with more than angels' food the eucharistic feast for the faithful, sheds the morning light of immortality into the valley of the shadow of death, garnishes with all manner of precious stones the golden architecture of the New Jerusalem, flashes in the many-starred diadems of the redeemed cast down at the feet of the Lamb, and rings out forever in the choral harmony of the white-robed myriads around the sapphire throne!

More than enough! And after we have been pardoned and restored, redeemed and delivered, revived and purified, succored and comforted, a thousand thousand times,

there is still enough and to spare. And when all the saints, raised from the dust of death, and glorified together with their Lord, shall have found in his presence their fulness of joy, and in his likeness their perfect satisfaction, there shall still remain a plenitude — an infinite reserve — of mercy in the heart of God. And if there are other fallen worlds to share with us the supply, and if half the countless orbs that float in the far immensity are as full of sin and suffering as our own, yet is there enough for all the wants and woes of their incalculable and inconceivable population. It is a fountain which the universe can never exhaust, an ocean which eternity alone can measure. An angel's line cannot fathom the abyss; an angel's wing cannot compass the infinitude. The *pleroma* of light is also the *pleroma* of love; and it requires the mind of God, to know the heart of God. We stand in speechless amaze upon the brink of this unsounded sea, or exclaim with St. Paul — "Oh the depth! . . . how unsearchable! . . . past finding out!"

"Thy mercies, gracious Lord! to me,
To every soul, abound;
A vast unfathomable sea,
Where all our thoughts are drowned.

"Its streams the whole creation reach,
So plenteous is the store;
Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough for evermore!"

Trust we then, my dear brethren! in this revelation of our heavenly Father's heart. What need we more for

our assurance and consolation in life or death? Poor, trembling, contrite soul! dismiss thy doubts and fears. Despair not for the greatness of thy guilt, the hardness of thy heart, the strength of evil habits, or the power of wicked spirits; for "the Lord is plenteous in mercy." Oh! are there not those here who need this precious assuring word? Are there not those here who fear the Lord and obey the voice of his servant, yet because of the weakness of their faith walk in darkness and have no light? Are there not those here who have been baptized and confirmed, who habitually come to the holy communion, who love the habitation of the Lord's house and the place where his honor dwelleth, who are yet bowed down with a sense of utter unworthiness and almost crushed with the conscious burden of their sins? Come, then, ye heavy-laden and broken-hearted! Come and look into the heart of God! What see you there but mercy — mercy richer than the treasures of all kingdoms, and more inexhaustible than the light of the everlasting sun? See! he smiles a gracious welcome, and the hands stretched forth to receive thee have thy name engraven upon their palms. Look up, O dejected and penitent brother!

"Earth hath no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal."

The Star of Bethlehem has eclipsed all the constellations. Calvary tokens are thickening about the throne. Every seraph has found a new harp, and is singing a new song; and clear and full above the ancient choral hallelujahs, swells the sweet refrain — "Plenteous in mercy!" Take

up the mighty antiphon, ye morning stars, and all ye sons of God ! and send it echoing, like the blended thunders of all worlds, through the rejoicing universe ! Let hell catch the strain, and roll it back to heaven, louder than all the lamentations of the lost ! — “The Lord is plentiful in mercy !”

XXVII.

Twenty-third Day of Lent.

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, A.M.

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. — JOHN iv. 10.

ONE of the incidents most vividly impressed upon the memories of all attentive readers of the Gospels is this interview of Jesus with the woman of Samaria. Jesus, in the early days of his ministry, goes on foot with his disciples from Judæa to Galilee. He knows that the Jewish rulers have at last heard of his work and mission; that they have heard with indignation that he has gathered around him a band of disciples, and that these disciples, under his guidance, are aiding to increase the numbers of his converts, and are baptizing the new converts in his name. This especially fills them with wrath. John the Baptist, the wild wandering preacher, also baptizes

those who are roused to repentance by his fiery words ; and the Jewish rulers have thrown no hinderance in his way. But they only tolerate in him what they dare not interfere with. The people are so attached to John, and hold his holy, self-denying life in the Jordan deserts in such pious reverence, that it would be dangerous for the Jewish leaders to try to stop his work. But this new zealot, this Jesus of Nazareth, — his strange proceedings they will put an end to, before he too becomes a dangerous favorite with the common folk. Jesus hears how their anger and jealousy are rearing themselves up against him ; and doubtless deeming it better to go elsewhere, for the present at all events, with his gospel of peace and salvation, goes with his disciples towards Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria. His home at Nazareth, whither he is really going, is some eighty miles distant. He is going to walk all the way. Think of our Saviour and his disciples braving the glare of an Eastern sky as they go on their long walk ; resting when the sun is hottest, or when they are weary and need refreshment and sleep, by the wayside wells or under the shade of the fig-trees or in the caves of the rocks. They have journeyed on for about six and thirty miles, when they come to Jacob's Well about midday ; and Jesus, weary, sits down to rest upon the low wall which encircles the well, while his disciples go on to Sychar to buy food wherewith to make a midday meal. They doubtless go to seek out the shop or store of some Jewish resident in this land of Samaria, from whom they may buy the bread they need so much. For the Jews, as a little later on

the narrative itself teaches us, have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jews and Samaritans regard each other with deadly hatred. True, the people of Samaria declare that they are the descendants of Joseph, the most honorable of the sons of Jacob; that they are the representatives too of the ten tribes of Israel. But the Jews laugh to scorn their claims. "No, no!" they say: "the ten tribes were lost when the people of Israel were carried off captive into Persia and Assyria by Shalmaneser, the Assyrian king. A few stragglers who had hid themselves in the forests and mountains and caves of the surrounding district did indeed return, and united themselves to the Greek and Syrian colonists who had established themselves in the deserted country. You Samaritans are not true Israelites: you are only the descendants of the scanty remnant who united themselves in marriage with the idolatrous Greeks and Syrians who brought their gods of brass and stone into the desolated land. You are not true Israelites; you are not the true chosen people of God. We despise you, we will treat you as outcasts. We will not pollute ourselves by mingling with the offspring of a heathen rabble. To do so would render us unclean."

And so it is in vain that the Samaritans urge that they are really descended, through the line of Ephraim, from Joseph and Rachel; and that Mount Gerizim, on which their forefathers had built a sacred temple, is the hill which had been chosen for the republication of the Divine law. The Jews defy them to prove their descent: their own descent from Judah is beyond all dispute.

And, as to the temple which the Samaritans had built for themselves, have they not, when assailed by persecution, been but too ready to renounce their God, and dedicate his temple to Jupiter or some other heathen god?

And so Jews and Samaritans go on, generation after generation, dwelling apart and in utter enmity; the Samaritans looking upon the Jews as narrow-minded, cold-hearted bigots; the Jews scorning the Samaritans as outcasts from the chosen people, and strangers to the one true God. There is never any interchange of courtesy between them, never any intercourse. Such would render a Jew unclean. And to be unclean means, to a Jew, something terrible to think of. It means to be compelled to live alone, as a prisoner in house or tent, to have to break up all vessels polluted by his own touch, to have to wash his own garments; it means loss of time, loss of money, loss of pleasure, loss of every thing that makes life endurable, as long as the imputation of uncleanness attaches to him: it means, in short, to be forsaken by his friends, and to be looked upon as cut off from God.

While our Lord is waiting for his disciples to return, there cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus says unto her, "Give me to drink." The woman looks at him amazed. If one of her own despised nation, or any wandering stranger not a Jew, had asked her, she would not have paused a moment, but would have given him water to drink just as freely as Rebekah held her pitcher to the lips of Eliezer. But the wearied stranger before her is a Jew, and she knows that the great doctors at Jerusalem have bidden the Jews have naught to do

with the Samaritans, — to eat no bread they have baked, to taste no wine they have pressed, to drink no water they have drawn, and not even to exchange with them a word of kindly greeting. And so she says to our Lord in tones of surprise, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?” Then says Jesus unto her, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” These are words full of grace and beauty, which we may well ponder. But we may first consider the lesson which the fact of our Lord addressing a Samaritan woman yields to us, and the meaning which lies veiled beneath the words he uses.

Notice that our Lord accosts the woman as soon as she comes nigh to the well. He does not wait for her to speak first. He looks upon her, and sees the deep need she has to be told the good news of salvation. He speaks to her, and tells her what as yet he has not told even his devoted disciples. She seeks not him, yet he is resolved to be found of her. Others come to him with earnest and passionate entreaty, falling at his feet, touching the hem of his garment, washing his feet with penitent tears. The woman of Samaria comes not thus. She does not knowingly come to him at all. She comes simply to draw water to satisfy the thirst of herself and family. She comes little thinking of the gracious offering of living water which the Messiah — the long-looked-for Messiah — would make to her. She comes to the well, and sees resting there a stranger; but what is he to her? He is

but a Jew, who thinks scorn of such as she is. She is not going to say any thing to one who thinks the very air polluted by her presence. And yet that Jewish stranger, resting in his thirstiness and weariness at the well-side, speaks to her. He says unto her, "Give me to drink." At first these words seem not to have any deep-hidden meaning; but wait, read on, listen to the gracious talk they lead up to. You see quickly how they are meant to lead the woman's thoughts gently from the water which bubbles up from the well-spring, to the water of life, the heavenly gift which Jesus himself can bestow. And, that Christ should thus speak to the Samaritan woman for the sake of preparing her mind for the good tidings he goes on to reveal to her, shows that he had come to seek and to save the souls of all, — of Gentiles as well as of Jews; of the Samaritans, the doubtful descendants of Joseph, as well as of the Jews, the undoubted children of Judah. The inspired voice of the aged Simeon had declared that the child Jesus was the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. Upon Jew and Gentile, then, Jesus sheds his light, and to both reveals his glory. The portals of his Church shall be open both to the Jews who worship at Jerusalem, and to the Samaritans whose adoration was wont to ascend to the Most High from the temple on Mount Gerizim. Henceforth there shall be none despised, none unclean: all shall be proclaimed equal in God's sight; what God has cleansed, no man shall call common. The self-righteousness which causes Jew to treat Samaritan as an outlaw, as an abhorred out-cast, shall have no entrance into the Church of Christ;

the unrighteous contention, the mutual cursings, the bitter hatred, which keep Jew and Samaritan asunder, must not be known amongst the followers of Jesus, amongst those who accept his blessed gospel of peace and goodwill.

As we have also seen, my friends, in reply to the exclamation of the Samaritan woman at being asked for water by a Jew, Jesus utters very gracious words: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." "Living water!" The full force of this phrase will not strike us until we have paused for a moment to consider the images it would give rise to in the mind of one who dwelt beneath an Eastern sky. We ourselves, my friends, are not so much touched by imagery relating to water and rain, as we are by imagery having reference to sunshine and bright blue skies. With the abundant moisture that falls upon these Western lands, our most grateful feelings are roused by the thought, not of rain, but of cheerful sunshine ; and, like the old Greeks, we are tempted to salute the sun with a joyful exclamation every time he emerges from behind a cloud. And yet we are not insensible to the blessings which God vouchsafes to us by sending his bounteous rain upon the earth. We are not so heedless as to forget the manifold uses of water,—as to forget that water is the source of all the changefulness and beauty in the clouds above us ; that water is the instrument by which the earth has been modelled into symmetry, and its rocks fashioned into glorious forms ; that under the form of snow it robes the mountain summits with transcendent

light ; that under the guise of morning dew it clothes the autumn fields with silvery sheen ; that it is but drops of falling rain turning back sunlight to the eye, that produce the many-colored rainbow ; that we see its varied glory and beauty in the foam of the torrent, in the broad lake, in the glancing river, in the wild, unwearied, unconquerable sea. Still we should fail to be touched by the beauty and depth of meaning involved in the words "living water," as would a dweller in an Eastern land. To understand the images which would be called up in the mind of an Eastern by mention of "living water," we should read our Bibles carefully, and note the abundant references to wells and water-springs, and how often they are spoken of as "special gifts of God, life-giving and divine." Or, we should have journeyed to the far East, we should know the weariness of wandering in a sandy desert, with a scorching sun in a burning sky, the air around all cloudy with dust, the distant mountains quivering in the tremulous haze. We should know what it is to suffer from enervating heat, from torturing thirst. Our minds would then gratefully welcome the thought of living water. At the sound of such words, we should think with delight of every thing associated with water : we should think of the spring of water rising up under the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, of the well dug in the desert long ago by patriarchal hands, and of our own delight at reaching the same at the close of a toilsome day.

But by living water Jesus does not mean earthly water. He means a gift which is from heaven. He means the

divine life which flows from himself. He means the divine spiritual life which is ever outflowing from his sacred heart into the souls of his earthly brethren. Of this living water, earthly water is his own chosen symbol. And the more we ponder the symbol, the more are we struck by its marvellous appropriateness. Water ! what is it ? Is it not life-giving and nourishing ? Where there is water, there is life ; where there is life, there is water. The land is barren and dry where no water is, but even the wilderness may be made to blossom as the rose if the clouds do but pour their moisture upon it. No wonder that the earliest of the great Greek philosophers in his search after truth conceived that water was the ultimate principle of the universe, the very essence of all created matter, the primal substance from which, by manifold and subtle transformations, the great Creator had made all things.

Think again of water as it passes through its unchanging cycle of change, — as caressed by the sunbeams it springs up from the ocean, springs up to the highest vault of heaven, in the form of vapor invisible to the human eye ; as it there becomes visible in the moving clouds, which form what has been called Nature's ever-changing picture-gallery ; as it descends in the form of star-crystalled snow, or in drops of rain ; as it becomes massed around the mountain summits in snow-fields of dazzling whiteness ; as it descends the winding valleys in the form of glaciers ; as it trickles down the mountain gulleys in tiny rills ; as it leaps over crags in foaming cataracts ; as after various omnipresent cleansing and fertilizing work, — making the grass to grow upon the mountains, and

causing the herb to grow for the service of men,—it gathers together into river-channels, and hurries on to join once more the waters of the ocean from which whilom it sprang.

Is it not, in its various beneficent manifestations, a fitting symbol of the divine life which flows from the heart of Christ to enrich the souls of his human brethren? Just as all fruitful soil and every thing living which springs from it are more or less saturated with the moisture which falls upon it or is conveyed to it by a thousand tiny channels, so are all who are members of the Christian Church—all who are in union with Christ—members of that Church and in union with Christ by virtue of the divine life flowing from the heart of Jesus to take up its abode in their hearts, and fill them with all spiritual blessings.

Without this divine life, we can have no spiritual life within us. If it be withdrawn from us, our souls droop and faint. They feel far from the heavenly home, banished from the Lord's presence. They feel themselves to be in a barren and dry land where no water is. Whatever be the work which we have to do in this world, it will never be done with so much might, it will never be done so effectually, as when our souls are throbbing with the fulness of divine life. That artist was right, who, feeling it so hopeless for him to attempt to realize on canvas the glorious visions which before had floated through his soul, used to kneel down and pray for more divine life to be vouchsafed to him. Work of any kind—the work of the poet, of the artist, of the teacher, of the artisan, or of the woman who simply strives to

order her household aright, and to train up her children in the nurture and fear of the Lord — will be done most nobly when the soul is animated with the life which is ever flowing from the heart of Christ.

O my friends ! may we ever strive and yearn for this divine life, so that we may do the duties of this our earthly life with a strength which the Lord alone can impart, with a clearness of spiritual vision which can alone be granted by him, and so that even on this earth the heavenly life may be quickened within us, and a triumphant progress commenced, — a progress which shall know no ending, but which shall be continued evermore in the spiritual world beyond !

XXVIII.

Twenty-fourth Day of Lent.

MARVELS OF MERCY.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. — Ps. ciii. 11.

WHO, that knows the Divine mercy, can ever weary in singing its wonders? When the royal poet touches this theme, he seems transported with delight, and no form of words is adequate to the utterance of his joy. The eighth verse is a simple but touching statement. In the ninth

and tenth that statement is intensified by re-iteration and amplification. Now the author rises from plain propositions to sublime comparisons. Let us rise with him. Let us try to enter into his estimate of that which is inestimable to all but the Infinite himself. "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."

Glorious conception! Go out, in the clear and quiet night, and contemplate the stupendous altitude of the starry cope — worlds on worlds, systems above systems, nebulæ beyond nebulæ, separated by distances for which we have no measure, and of which we can conceive no idea. This is David's picture of the Divine mercy.

On the outer verge of the solar system rolls the great planet Neptune. Its distance from the earth, though it may be stated in miles, utterly confounds the imagination. Had Adam been endowed with the power of traversing the void immensity; had he set forth for that distant goal immediately after his creation; had he proceeded fifty miles an hour, and lived to the present day; he must have been journeying yet, and far short of the end of his journey, for it would require more than six thousand years. So high is the heaven above the earth; yet so great is the mercy of the Lord toward them that fear him.

But within the limits of the solar system we are only cruising in a cluster of little islands lying along the coast of God's creation. The fixed stars, so called, are probably all suns, some of them vastly larger than that which makes our day, and emitting many thousand times as much light; yet they are so remote, that they appear but

luminous points in the firmament ; and sweeping immeasurable orbits, they never seem to change, by so much as a hair's breadth, their relative positions. And the telescope reveals myriads more, so far beyond these, that they are utterly invisible to the unaided eye. And astronomers tell us of others — a host innumerable — situated at so inconceivable a distance, that light, travelling at the rate of a hundred and eighty thousand miles a second, or ten million and eight hundred thousand miles a minute, would require five hundred years to traverse the space between them and us. And it is believed beyond all doubt that there are others still — billions upon billions — so far away, that not a solitary ray from any one of them has ever yet visited this planet since the day of its creation, and will not for incalculable ages yet to come. So high is the heaven above the earth ; yet so great is the mercy of the Lord toward them that fear him.

Impressed with this thought, I divest myself of materiality, and go forth, a disembodied spirit, to explore the vastness of the universe, that I may be able to form some faint idea of my heavenly Father's mercy. With the speed of an angel's wing passing the outer orbits of the solar system, I direct my course toward some feebly glimmering star, that seems a lone sentinel on one of the farthest outposts of heaven. Sirius and Aldebaran fall behind me, Orion and the Pleiades ; while the twinkling point at which I aim expands into a magnificent orb, larger than a million such as I have left. There arriving, I pause, and look back for my native planet. It is no longer visible. But in the direction whence I came, I catch the

faint scintillations of a scarcely discernible star. It is our sun. Oh, what a distance I have travelled! Yet so great is the mercy of the Lord toward them that fear him.

I look upward again. New heavens reveal themselves above me; and the living sapphires, as numerous as ever, still gem the azure immensity. I plume my spirit pinions for another flight. I dart forward with the velocity of a sunbeam. I sweep through other wildernesses of unknown worlds. Centuries are consumed in my passage. Multiplying my speed by millions, I mount with the rapidity of thought for a thousand years. View after view is exhausted. Universe after universe is traversed. Myriads of suns succeeding myriads spring to light before me, expand into majestic orbs as I approach them, wheel off to the right and left as I pass, close in again behind me, dwindle into mere luminous points, and disappear in the distance. Systems after systems, clusters above clusters, *nebulæ* beyond *nebulæ*, rise like thin specks of haze upon my vision, and broaden and brighten into immense fields of suns, which I map off into sections and count by the billion. O Lord, my God! thy heaven is infinite! Yet so great is thy mercy toward them that fear thee.

Who, then, that feareth him, can despise his mercy, or despair of its redeeming power? Let us lay hold of his strength, and work out our own salvation. It is not in the province of Omnipotence to save us without our own consent and co-operation. The Maker of the worlds cannot coerce the human will. In spite of infinite compassion, the sinner chooses his own course, forms his own character, fixes his own eternal state. God pleads with

him, but cannot constrain him. Christ weeps over him, but cannot avert his doom. Not a machine, but a free agent, Heaven cannot violate his moral constitution. If the mainspring of a watch is wrong, the maker can remove it and put in another ; but if the human heart is perverse and rebellious, it cannot be corrected against its own volition, without its own action, even by the almightiness of its Creator. Thought most awful and appalling — that human perverseness should baffle the love of God and thwart the wisdom of his mercy ! Yet so it is ; and for those who persist in sin Christ hath died in vain ; and the gospel of redemption is to them a savor of death unto death. Oh ! let us return to the mercy-seat, sprinkling our sinfulness with the atoning blood, and breathing the prayer of the contrite heart — “ God be merciful to me a sinner.” Then shall the Father of mercies smile and say — “ Son, be of good cheer ! thy sins be forgiven thee ! ” and the devouring fire of his holiness, which now menaces the guilty, shall melt the heart in its flame, but consume only the guilt ; and with joyful appreciation we shall be able to sing — “ As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him ! ”

XXIX.

Twenty-fifth Day of Lent.

THE HIDDEN LIFE.

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, M.A.

Your life is hid with Christ in God. — COL. iii. 3.

LIFE is a mystery, however we regard it. The life of our natural body is a mystery. The inner life of every man is a mystery. The life of the Christian soul is a mystery. The apostle tells us it is hid with Christ in God.

Think what a mystery the human soul is. The body is a mystery, but is not the soul a greater one? Think you that the Divine Creator of body and soul would fashion the outward fabric wonderfully, and not marvellously endow the indwelling spirit? Think you that that which has but a short time to live, — which cometh up, and is cut down like a flower; which fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay, — that the body, which ere long will have, as Job says, to make its bed in the darkness; which will have to say to corruption, "Thou art my father;" to the worm, "Thou art my mother and my sister," — that the perishing body would be gifted with comeliness and symmetry, and with organs the wonders of which men have been exploring for ages without exhausting them, — think you that the body would be so surpass-

ing in marvels, without the soul being transcendently wondrous? The body, the abode of unfathomable mystery though it be, what is it without the soul? As soon as the soul takes her flight, the body is seized upon by corruption and the worm. But the soul is immortal. Think what is meant by the soul and its immortality! Memory, imagination, reason, the emotions, and the will, — these are but so many faculties of the soul. These will never die. These will not be buried with the body. Every impression which has ever been made upon our souls will be preserved forever. Our earthly knowledge will not perish. We shall, we may be very sure, be guided into higher knowledge. The memory of every day of bliss will abide with us evermore. The love, the joy, the peace, and every fruit of the Holy Spirit which our hearts have borne, will cling to us forever. Eye indeed hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the destiny which is in store for the human soul.

And it is the inmost depths of the Christian soul of which the apostle speaks. They are hid with Christ in God. A Christian soul scarcely needs even an apostle's words to tell this. The same Divine Spirit which illumined St. Paul's soul, and unveiled to him this deep suggestive truth, has access to the souls of all lovers of Jesus. They know that St. Paul speaks what is divinely true. Their own experience has taught them so. Each individual soul knows that its history is a sealed book to all but Christ. No human friend can press close enough to read all that is written on the tablets of the heart. The heart knoweth,

and the stranger comprehendeth not, not simply its own bitterness, but also its own joy, its own yearnings after Christ, its own aspirations for more holiness, its own resolves to walk in holy ways, — resolves naturally weak, but made strong by the aid of Him without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy. Each soul knows its own inward strivings after good, its own struggles with the tempter, its own encounters with surrounding evil, its own weakness or strength in resisting the beguilements of the flesh ; and no eye other than the Lord's has read the soul's secrets.

Yes, my friends, no other eye than the Lord's can read the records of the soul's inner life. We can never thoroughly disclose ourselves to one another. We can never reveal to a human friend all the intensity of our inner life. The human soul, though living within the confines of the human body, is, at the same time, on the borders of an unseen world. The Lord who dwells in the unseen world is nearer to the human soul than any earthly friend can be. The soul is a sanctuary which God has called his own. "Behold, all souls are mine." And although our Christian life requires for its due fostering, that we should confide in one another, that we should live in sweet communion one with another, and in interchange of the good and noble thoughts which flow into our hearts from the Author of all goodness, yet we cannot reveal all the soul's inner thoughts to one another. It would seem as though we could not get much beyond the threshold of one another's souls. There is an innermost shrine which cannot be entered by the closest human friend ; an inner-

most shrine in which we hold communion with the Lord, — a communion which indeed constitutes the hidden life of the soul. To no earthly friend can we reveal the ecstasy of such hidden communings. It would be irreverent curiosity for one to try with questionings and probings to force from another the hidden secrets of the soul's spiritual communing with the Lord. No earthly friend must raise the veil which shrouds from view the life hidden with Christ in God.

The Christian soul is often visited with joys and sorrows which even the nearest friends know not of. You all know well how your souls are touched by various little things in every-day life, and how the start of joy or the throb of pain is only known to yourselves and the Lord. You hear, perhaps, a simple strain of music, or see some forgotten relic of your earlier days, or read all alone by the fireside some book, or look into the faces of your children ; and instantly there come welling up within you thoughts whose only expression is a glistening tear. No earthly one knows how your hearts have been touched : but in heaven there is One who knows ; the gentle episode is henceforth a secret between you and him.

What is this, my friends, but one of the phases of the communion of the soul with the Lord? We are not given to dwell much upon this aspect of the soul's union with Christ, of its life being thus hid with him. We are oft so overborne by the feeling of our own unworthiness, that we forget that the Lord knows the best of us as well as the worst. We think of him as the reader of our heart's saddest secrets, but not as the inspirer of our brightest

thoughts and holiest desires. If we were to contemplate him more in this light than we do, might we not be the better able to keep truer to ourselves, less liable to fall away from the high standard of duty we place before ourselves in our highest moments? In truth, the thought of each one of us might be, "Thou, O Lord, hast entered into heart-communion with me, and my soul's noblest thoughts have not been hid from thee: but thou, too, canst read what is vile within me; and shalt thou have to see the heart which thou hast consecrated by thy presence, become the abode of evil thoughts, the fountain whence shall issue evil words and unholy deeds?" O my friends! we can hide our hearts, when stained with sin, when degrading thoughts have taken possession of them, from an earthly friend who has been in heart-nearness to us in moments of exaltation; but we cannot do so from the Lord. He has searched us out and known us. There is not a word in our tongue, but he knoweth it altogether. No inward thought is hid from him. Whither shall we go from his Spirit? The darkness which veils us from each other is no darkness with him, but the night is as clear as the day.

You know, my friends, that in Christ we are bidden to behold God manifest in the flesh. In him we are to behold the Divine in unison with the human. He came down from heaven to unite himself, not simply to the human in the person of the Son of the blessed Mary, but also to all humanity, — to bring all humanity into unison with the Divine. This great work he is even now carrying on. And he draws humanity into unity with the Divine,

by drawing towards himself the individual members of the human family. As they are drawn nearer and nearer to him, he inspires them more and more with his Divine Spirit. The human hearts which have become the abodes of his Spirit are so drawn into mystic union with their Lord, that their life is hid with Christ in God. So that the apostle's words do but call our attention to one of the phases of the great work which the divine Redeemer is carrying on amongst the human souls of his earthly brethren.

And it is well that we should from time to time think of this great work,—that we should dwell upon the thought that the Divine One is ever drawing near to us; that although by reason of our Lord's ascension into heaven, by reason of his retiring behind the veil which screens from us the spiritual world, he is not visible to the outward eye, he is nevertheless visible to the eye of faith; that, though our outward hands may not touch him, he can be received into the embraces of our souls; that, though no sound of his voice fall upon the outward ear, the still small voice of his loving inspiration can make itself heard within us. It is well that we should think that the Divine is ever in our midst,—is not sundered from us by stellar space, but is ever with us, is ever our Immanuel. Oh, let us believe that the Divine One is ever near us, ever desirous to be welcomed by us, to be received by us as our Redeemer, to save us from sin, from frivolity, from ignorance, from narrowness of heart and mind, from worldly pride, from the bigotry and self-righteousness which spring from a grovelling spiritual

life ! Let us believe that he is ever yearning to carry on in us the great work of the incarnation, so that the Divine may be united with the human in us, and the human be raised into union with the Divine ; so that indeed the word, the life, the thought of God may become flesh in us as in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This truth of the life of the Christian soul consisting in its union with the Lord should be very precious to us. It is a truth of which men have different and varied experiences. For, as it is possible for men to grow in grace and in knowledge of their Lord and Saviour, so is it possible for some to enter into a closer union with the Lord than has been vouchsafed to others. It is possible that some in their religious life have not been as yet so richly blessed as others ; but all who have the faintest yearnings in their hearts towards Christ may feel assured that that yearning is not so feeble as to be unrecognized by the Lord. He knows of the work begun in their souls. He knows that they are drawing nigh unto himself. He will aid them to draw into nearer union still. He will so draw near to them that his Divine Spirit shall be abundantly shed upon them, and that the divine work which started from such faint and feeble beginnings shall go on ; and that the souls so drawn to him shall in this life experience the full blessing of having their inward life hid with Christ in God, and in the life to come enjoy the felicity of eternal union with the Lord.

XXX.

Twenty-sixth Day of Lent.

SIN IMMEASURABLY REMOVED.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. — Ps. ciii. 12.

DOUBTLESS many of you are familiar with the Divine ordinance of the scape-goat, recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus. The high-priest chose two he-goats from the flock, and presented them for a sin-offering before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle. Then he cast lots upon them, which should be for Jehovah, and which for Azazel. The former he slew, and sprinkled its blood upon the mercy-seat, to make atonement for the transgressions of his people. Upon the head of the latter he laid his hands, and confessed over it the sins of the congregation, thus symbolically transferring their guilt to their typical substitute ; and sent it away into the wilderness, where it was turned loose, or hurled over a precipice. This whole transaction typified the work of Christ, who died for our sins, and still lives to bear them away. As one goat could not represent both the sacrificial death and the subsequent intercessory life, two were necessary to complete the type. In the one, Christ atones for us ; in the other, he is our ever-living Mediator. As he bore

our sins upon the cross, he still bears them before his Father's throne. Reconciled by his death, we are saved by his life.

The Hebrew word *Azazel*, used in this connection, and nowhere else in Holy Scripture, seems to be a proper name; and what or whom does it designate, but the accursed prince of evil? To *Azazel*, Satan, the old serpent, the scape-goat was consigned, laden with the guilt of Israel. It is fit that the author of sin should bear its ultimate curse. He who brought it with him into our world, must carry it out with him in his everlasting exile. His own sin first cast him down from heaven; and ours, which he has instigated, shall hurl him forth from the redeemed earth. Burdened with the double guilt of his own original crime, and that of those whom he has seduced from their allegiance to the eternal King, he shall sink in the bottomless pit of an irredeemable damnation, and the distance of the nethermost hell from the heaven of heavens shall measure the removal of our transgressions from us.

This is God's method of putting away sin, and expelling it from the universe forever. Fallen in the first Adam, we rise in the second. On him were laid the iniquities of us all; and he hath borne them away so far, that the fierce accuser, however diligently he seek, shall never find them, till they return in retributive wrath and ruin upon his own devoted head. In our text, the vagueness of the thought indicates its vastness. The east is infinitely removed from the west. The circumference of the earth does not measure the interval. The extremi-

ties of its orbit do not touch the boundary. The remotest planet of our system, swinging on its pendulum at every oscillation five thousand four hundred and ninety-two millions of miles, does not approach the limit here supposed. Neither the circuit of the sun nor the sweep of the stellar host, even were we able to form an adequate idea of such a distance, could help us to any conception of the immensity thus intimated. The stars that twinkle billions of leagues beyond the rising day have an infinite east on the other side of them, and the constellations that glow as far beyond the vermilion curtains of the evening send their beams still onward into a boundless west. All is indefinite and illimitable. There is neither beginning nor end. Yet so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Methinks I see the Adversary prosecuting the baleful quest, that he may have wherewith to charge us before the great white throne. He seeks them in Gethsemane ; but blood better than that of Abel cries from the ground, and tells him they are not there. He inquires for them at Golgotha ; but the rent rocks and open graves inform him they are not there. He hastes to the holy sepulchre ; but two angels, sitting within the empty vault, assure him they are not there. He descends to the shades of Hades ; but a thousand happy spirits, rejoicing in the intelligence of their redemption, testify that their Redeemer did not leave them there. He returns to the Mount of Olives ; but the chariot of the ascension has gone over the everlasting hills, and no black mantle of human guilt fell behind as it rose. Swifter than lightning, the wrathful fiend

shoots off into the infinitude of worlds, inquiring at every habitation of intelligence, as he passes, whither went our Champion with the sins of his ransomed race? "We saw him as he swept by with his heavenly train," answer the planets all, "and knew that he bore away the iniquities of our sister Earth, but none of his attendants tarried to tell us whither." He asks Sirius, and Sirius replies:—"I heard the sound of his trumpets, and saw the coruscation of his chariots, and went forth to worship him; but before I had finished my obeisance, he was beyond the bounds of the Galaxy." He interrogates Orion, and Orion responds:—"The voice of applauding millions fell upon my ear, and I beheld the returning Conqueror, with a mighty concourse of his holy ones; and as he went by, he waved me a gracious benediction, and I sent after him a shout of joy that woke the echoes of a thousand worlds; but in a moment the rear-guard of his host disappeared among the happy constellations." At the Pleiades he pauses and repeats the question, and the Pleiades exclaim:—"At the rushing of immortal wings we rose; and lo! the radiance of imperial ensigns, brighter than a million suns; and amidst a triumphal array outdoing all magnificence, sat the incarnate Son of God upon his living chariot-throne; and at our reverent salutation, he lifted a diadem of many crowns, and showed a blood-marked brow; and his hands, upraised to bless us, were pierced with ghastly wounds; but to the music of the morning stars, the celestial procession marched on, and we caught the flash of helm and coronet from behind the brightest of the nebulae." Thus through stratum after

stratum of sidereal suns and systems, ever baffled in his vengeful quest, hastes the accursed inquisitor of doom, while all the powers and principalities in heavenly places torment his unwilling ear with the same evangel of mercy : — “ Bearing the crimes of one world, the spoils of another, and the crowns of all, the divine Conqueror has passed on into the blessed immensities and eternities ; and we observed all the happy universes along his path doing him delighted homage, and heard myriads of redeemed immortals in his train chanting the wonders of his love, till from one end of heaven to the other rang the great chorus of triumph.” Maddened and desperate at length, he swears by all the thrones of hell, and by the sevenfold central hell within him, that he will wreak his hitherto thwarted vengeance upon other innocent creations ; and summoning all his baleful powers, he turns to see where he may find his likeliest victim. But his hour is come — the judgment of reprobate angels. Now shall ransomed humanity be finally avenged of its adversary. The crucified Hand which took away our curse hurls it with infinite aggravations back upon its author ; and down he plunges, a darkened and shattered sun, blasted and staggering through the wild chaos of crazed and dissolving worlds, to the place of eternal punishment, so remote from the seats of the blessed that never a ray of light fell upon its gloom, or seraph’s wing waved over its battlements ; and from every province of Immanuel’s happy empire, forever purged of the plague, rises once more the sweet refrain — “ As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us ! ”

XXXI.

Twenty-seventh Day of Lent.

JUSTIFICATION.

REV. F. W. FABER, D.D.

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. — ROM. iii. 24.

As the great work of the incarnation seems to flow out of creation, and to be the crowning and fulfilling of it, so does the work of justification proceed from the incarnation, or hang from it as its divine and glorious fruit. The justification of a sinner is surely one of the most beautiful works of God, and deserves our most loving contemplation. Looking at it simply as the transit from a state of sin to a state of sanctifying grace, without any consideration of the dispositions remotely or proximately comprehended in it, it is full of wonder, and of the peculiar character of the Divine operations. The first moment of the life of grace is the last moment of the life of sin: nay, rather, it is itself the death of sin. Nothing comes between. Neither does God use the instrumentality of angel or saint, but he himself immediately communicates that grace to his creature's soul; and the creature is justified not merely by an act of the Divine will, but by an unspeakable communication of the Divine nature. It is a greater work than the creation, for

many reasons. First of all, it implies the incarnation as well. Then creation is simply out of nothing, whereas justification is accomplished on a previously reluctant matter, — the corrupt will of man. He, says St. Austin, who made you without you, will not justify you without you. Creation, again, is ordained for a natural good ; justification, for a supernatural one. To quote St. Austin again, it is a greater thing to justify the impious than to create heaven and earth. The good of a single grace, says St. Thomas, is greater than the natural good of the whole universe ; and the Church in her collect teaches us that God manifests his omnipotence chiefly in sparing and showing mercy.

Let us take a case to make it clear. A man goes forth from his house into the streets of London, in a state of sin. The weight of God's wrath, and the curse of the blood of Christ, are heavy upon his soul. To the angels he is a sight of unutterable loathing and disgust, if his state is known to them. He would not dare to have his sins whispered in the crowd, for the contempt even of his fellow-sinners would crush him to the earth. He is the slave of the dark demon, in a bondage more foul, more degrading, more tyrannical, more abject, than the horrors of African slavery can show. In his breast, though he hardly knows it, he has the beginnings of hell, and the germs of everlasting hatred of Almighty God. Cain, savage and gloomy and restless, wandering curse-goaded over the unpeopled earth, was not worse off than he ; perhaps better. In the streets he meets a funeral. Thoughts crowd into his mind. Faith is awake, and on

the watch. Grace disposes him for grace. The veil falls from sin; and he turns from the hideous vision with shame, with detestation, with humility. The eye of his soul glances to his crucified Redeemer. Fear has led the way to hope, and hope has the heart to resolve, and faith tells him that his resolution will be accepted, and he loves—how can he help loving Him who will accept so poor a resolution? There is a pressure on his soul. It was the pressure of the Creator, omnipotent, immense, all-holy, and incomprehensible, on his living soul. The unseen hand was laid on him only for a moment. He has not passed half a dozen shop-fronts, and the work is done. He is contrite. Hell is vanquished. The angels of heaven are in a stir of joy. His soul is beautiful. God is yearning over it with love and with ineffable desire. It needs only one cold touch of death, and an eternity of glory lies with all its vast and spacious realms of vision before him. And yet this work so wonderful, so beautiful, so altogether worthy of the Divine perfections, is not done once only, or now and then, or periodically, or to make an epoch in the world's history: it is being accomplished in churches, in hospitals, in prisons, on shipboard, on the scaffold, in the streets and fields of daily labor, close to the mower or the reaper or the gardener or the vine-dresser, who dreams not that God is in his neighborhood, so busy, and at so stupendous a work. For, to turn a child of Satan into a son of God is so tremendous a work, that St. Peter Chrysologus says of it, that the angels are astonished, heaven marvels, earth trembles, flesh cannot bear it, ears cannot take it in, the

mind cannot reach it, the whole creation is too weak to endure its magnitude, and is short of intellect to esteem it rightly, and is afraid of believing it, because it is so much.

XXXII.

Twenty-eighth Day of Lent.

GOD'S FATHERLY COMPASSION.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him — Ps. ciii. 13.

By two sublime similes the Psalmist has aided our poor estimate of the Divine mercy. By the first of them he lifts us from earth to heaven; by the second he carries us from one end of heaven to the other. Having traversed immensity and explored the universe without finding an adequate similitude for Jehovah's compassion, he now descends into the bosom of the family, and traces the most touching illustration of his theme in the tenderness of the paternal heart. We will descend with him. Here we are at home; experience comes to the help of imagination, and all is simple and easy to the understanding even of childhood. Necessarily, indeed, the picture is imperfect, for it is a finite thing brought forward to symbolize an infinite. Better might the glow-worm represent the sun, the sand-grain represent the globe, or the dew-

drop represent the ocean. But the illustration is the best that our human experience can furnish, and no possible comparison could appeal more powerfully to the profoundest sympathies of our nature. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

See that feeble old man, with careworn and sorrowful countenance, bending over the couch of that fair young invalid ; now pillowing her aching head upon his bosom, now bathing her fevered brow with his tears ; night after night, in weariness and pain, watching the stars out in ministrations of love at her side ; neglecting business, forgetting every interest, and sacrificing health and life itself, for her comfort and recovery. The wasted sufferer is the old man's daughter. Her mother is no more. Brother or sister has she none. He alone lives to care for her. She is the dearest object to him on earth, all that he has to love. The feelings of father, mother, sister, and brother, throb in his single heart. Suffering Christian ! so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

There is an obstinate and refractory boy. From infancy his intractableness has been plied with gentle dissuasives and mild remonstrances, such as none but a parent could employ. Sometimes the father has been forced to resort to more painful discipline. All expedients have hitherto failed to bend or break the iron sinew in the neck of the domestic rebel. Still severer measures are now resolved upon ; but the lad arrests the descending rod with confessions, and promises, and penitential tears. A hundred times already, in compassion to his pleading child, has the father refrained and forgiven ; yet

a hundred times has the offence been repeated, and ever with new aggravations. Will it be otherwise now, if the offender is spared? So would the father fain persuade himself. His heart melts at the tears of his son, his arm is paralyzed by the imploring tone, and the intended correction becomes an affectionate caress. Penitent sinner! so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

Make way for the returning prodigal! Years ago he received his portion and went into a far country. Severed from the sweet conservative influences of home, and yielding to the headlong impulse of youthful passion, he soon forgot his father's counsels, and squandered all he had in profligate indulgence. Reduced to the last extremity, he degraded himself to the condition of a swineherd; and in his hunger, envied the filthy beasts their fare. Naked, famishing, heart-broken, he remembers his former state, and resolves to return to his father. Will that father receive the son who has so debased himself and dishonored his family? Surely, he will not be very cordial; he will meet him with somewhat of reserve; and it will be only after long penitence and probation, that he will restore the ingrate to his full confidence and affection, and to his former place in his household. Nay, but he sees him coming, and his heart yearns for the wretched boy. He hastes to meet him; falls upon his neck; smothers his confession with kisses; calls for the best robe, the embroidered sandals, the bracelet set with glittering gems, the preparation for joyous festivities, and the merry-making dance and song; because this his son was dead, and is alive again — was lost, and is found.

Poor contrite heart! so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

But it deeply concerns us to know that we sustain the character to which all this paternal pity is assured. Do we fear God? Do we revere his holiness and his justice? Does the dread of his displeasure deter us from the violation of his law? Does the filial sentiment of duty and affection prompt us to obey him as our Father and honor him as our King? When we have wronged him by rebellion and base ingratitude, do we seek his feet with humble confessions, and fervent supplications, and honest purposes of amendment? These are important questions for us to answer. We are in danger of falling into the fatal mistake of those who apply indiscriminately to mankind all that the Holy Scriptures say of God's compassion and clemency to the penitent believer in Christ; not discerning between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth the Lord and him that serveth him not. But we must remember that God is a discriminator of character, though not a respecter of persons. He is good to all; but his redeemed people enjoy a peculiar interest in his goodness. His tender mercies are over all his works; but his tenderest mercies are for those who forsake their sins and walk in his holy ways. He freights the sun and the shower with blessings alike for the just and the unjust, for the thankful and the unthankful; but such only as have been brought into the bond of his covenant, and made members of his beloved Son, can have any claim upon his choicest, richest, sweetest mercies — his pardoning, purifying, renovating mercies —

his peace which passeth understanding — his joy unspeakable and full of glory, the communion of his saints on earth, and the fellowship of his throne in heaven. They whose hearts are not right with God have no part nor lot in the matter. They are still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. They are alien enemies, condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on them. Jehovah hath other attributes than mercy; and all his attributes agree in his moral government, like the concord of sweet sounds in a grand choral harmony. None of them is sacrificed to another, or thrown into the background to make another's display the more conspicuous. In every act of providence, in every dispensation of truth and grace, they unite, co-operate, and rejoice together. Hand in hand, they guard the gates of the first paradise, and open those of the heavenly Jerusalem. "A God all mercy were a God unjust." But he is just as well as merciful, and cannot acquit the guilty. He is holy as well as merciful, and cannot be reconciled to sin. He is true and unchangeable, and his threatenings as well as his promises must be fulfilled. He is as much obliged to punish the incorrigible, as he is disposed to pardon the penitent. Refusing the terms of forgiveness, you must take the penalty of transgression. The day is coming, when all the severer attributes shall rise up to avenge their insulted sister Mercy. Beware, I beseech you, of that day!

“For justice to judgment shall call,
And who shall their coming abide,
When wrath the most fearful of all —
The wrath of the Lamb — is defied!”

O thou immortal Victim of our sins ! God of compassion and clemency ! receive the humble sacrifice of our broken and contrite hearts, and enable us from experience to testify with all thy pardoned people, that — “ Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him ” !

XXXIII.

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

CONTENTMENT.

REV. H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, A.M.

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. —
PHIL. iv. 11.


WHEN St. Paul had learned that lesson, he did not need much more schooling. To be content with such things as we have, is the hardest and greatest lesson which we have to learn. We know that St. Paul was a very learned man, mighty in the scriptures, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel ; but he did not learn that lesson from books, nor from scribe, nor elder. He needed another schoolmaster, and a different school ; and one day he found that schoolmaster as he was going on the road to Damascus, when he heard a voice saying to him, “ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? ” Jesus Christ became his Master, and his school was the Christian life. Many and

hard were the lessons which were given him, at Lystra and Philippi, in the judgment-hall of Felix and Agrippa, in the Alexandrian ship, amid the waves at Melita, in the prison and the stocks ; but he learned them all, and so attained to the highest of all knowledge, — to *be content*. We too have this lesson set us, and happy are we if we learn it. There are many learned men who are ignorant in this matter. There are many who have the gift of tongues, who cannot say truly, “I am contented.” There are travellers who can find their way round the world, who have never found the road to heaven which leads by the way of contentment. I want you to go to school now, my brethren, and to learn that lesson. Without it our Christianity is but a name, our hope of salvation is a shadow. As God’s people of old were cut off in the wilderness, and shut out of the promised land, because they murmured, so with us to-day : murmuring lips cannot sing the praises of the Lamb ; a discontented heart can never send forth a thanksgiving. In this school we must have a master. Some things may be learned without a teacher ; a man may master a trade or develop his genius unaided : but if we want to learn contentment, we must have Jesus Christ as our teacher. We must go to Him who murmured not, who pleased not himself, who bore all things. His school is open to you now, open to all ranks and classes, rich and poor, clever and ignorant. Only come as little children desiring to be taught, and you shall learn a wisdom which is, in value, above rubies.

Let us think, first of all, of the advantages and bless-

ings of contentment. It has been truly said, by a great writer whose teaching I have embodied in this sermon, that contentment is the remedy for all evils. The contented man can pass through the fire of affliction, and escape burning; through seas of trouble, and the waves shall not go over his soul. He may endure hunger and nakedness, and yet not want. Contentment eases all life's burdens, salves all wounds, and mends all rags. Surely there is no excuse for our discontent, since we are God's: we are the clay, and he is the potter, and he has a right to do with us as seemeth him best. We live by his food; we work by his light; we breathe his air; all we have comes from him: how, then, dare we rebel against him? If misfortune comes upon us, contentment will remove its sting, since we know that we do not depend on chance, but on God who doeth all things well. Happy are we if we fear dishonesty more than death, and esteem impatience worse than a fever, and pride more terrible than loss of fortune. Happy are we if we think that poverty is better than covetousness, and if we let nothing trouble us except the knowledge that we have done a base action, or spoken foolishly, or thought wickedly.

And now let us seek for some plain, practical rules for learning contentment. First, let us always look at every misfortune on both sides, and weigh it in both hands. A trouble may come upon us which is very bad for the body, but very good for the soul. An enemy may heap reproaches upon us which are very hard to bear, but in those harsh words we may hear of some of our faults for



the first time. We may lose the favor of our friends because we have tried to do our duty ; but what then? we have gained the favor of God. A wise man, overtaken by a heavy storm of rain, will wrap his clothes around him, and think of the good which is being done to the crops : so, when the storm of trouble overtakes us, let us remember that it makes Christian virtues grow and increase.

Again, let us avoid a wish to change places with other people ; and, instead of comparing ourselves with the more prosperous, let us think of those who are worse off than ourselves. Would you have changed places with Dives for the sake of his purple and fine linen? Then remember that Dives was tormented in hell. Would you envy Judas his thirty pieces of silver? Not if you remember his remorse and suicide. Would you have changed places with Saul for the sake of a crown, or with Absalom for the sake of his beauty? Then remember how Saul perished at Gilboa, and that Absalom died a rebel to his father and his king.

Again, if you would learn contentment, when misfortune comes rather count up your blessings than your miseries. Look for the flowers in your path : the thorns will find you out without your seeking them. If you lose money, remember that you have health left ; if your bodily strength fails you, think that you have more time to look to your soul's health ; if your friends leave you, remember that you have God. Learn, also, not to meet troubles half way. Try not to fret about the possible cares which may come to-morrow : we have nothing to

do with to-morrow. We are dead to yesterday, and not yet born to the morrow: to-day only is ours. God has portioned out to every day its work, its burden, its trouble; and "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Strive too, my brothers, to be satisfied with what you have, rather than to be anxious for what you have not. You could not quench your thirst better from a river than from a tiny spring, nor would the draught be sweeter from a marble fountain than from a wayside pool. To the contented man, only one thing is an evil, that is *sin*; since "who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" It is no evil to be poor, but it is a great evil to be vicious or impatient. To be hungry is not so bad as to be gluttonous. Weariness is a less evil than sloth, loneliness than bad company. The pains of the body are better to bear than the torments of a lost soul. If you would be truly happy, learn to look on your troubles as God's blessings in disguise. Jacob said in his sorrow, "All these are against me:" yet those very things restored him to his son and to comfort. What brought Joseph to honor? A pit and a prison. What brought Daniel to his advancement in Babylon? A den of lions. What brought Jesus to the victory, and the right hand of his Father? A cruel cross. Yes, truly has it been said, "God sows blessings in the long furrows which the ploughers plough in the back of the Church." Whatever else you pray for, pray that you may learn the lesson of contentment; that you may feel truly that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" that you may be able to say, alike in trouble and pros-

perity, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

XXXIV.

Twenty-ninth Day in Lent.

THE TWO MITES.

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, A.M.

And Jesus looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God; but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. — ST. LUKE xxi. 1-4.

A GOOD lesson is here taught us. The poor widow offered to God what, for the time being, was her little all. The wealthy Jews, who had given their contributions, had but given what they could well spare from the abundance they possessed. It is well that we should heed the lesson here implied. It is well that the poor should be reminded that they, as well as the rich, can make acceptable offerings to God. It is well that the rich should be told that there is one thing in the world they cannot do so grandly, so royally, as the poor; and that is giving. It is well that the rich should be reminded that the loss of what

they give distresses them but little, for they give it of their abundance. If they come to church, and give their gold to be used in God's service, none of their comforts will thereby be diminished. They will be just as warmly clad, as daintily fed, as comfortably housed, as ever. There will be no diminished glow in the winter's fire; there will be no tiresome cheese-paring to put up with. All that the gift will affect will be the ruled page on which the record of expenses is kept. But to the really poor, giving comes much more home. To them, giving means extra pinching and contriving. It is liable to leave the purse empty altogether. It is liable to affect the contents of the scanty larder. Those who know the poor best can tell of the many kindnesses they manifest towards their neighbors whom distress or illness or any calamity overtakes. They can tell, that, though their hoard is little, their hearts are great; how out of their penury, but also out of the abundance of their kindliness, they render self-denying help from their own slender meal, and spare the choicest morsels to tempt a sick one to eat; and sacrifice their own rest to nurse one who otherwise would have to contend with illness all alone.

They also who work amongst the poor, ministering to their spiritual wants, bringing to them in their poverty the riches of the gospel of Christ, know well how to value the offerings which the poor, out of their penury, make in God's house. At the churches such as you find in large towns, free and open to all, and at which the maintenance of the services, and the carrying-on of the various works of charity in the parish, have to depend

on the freewill offerings of the worshippers, the poor man's pence and the poor widow's mite assert their powers. The offerings, though singly small, united are abundant. Many parish clergymen would rather have the poor always with them, to aid them in their work, than have to trust alone to the offerings of the few who are well-to-do. The poor, after all, cast in more than the rich. Like the widow in the Gospel story, last in the social scale, they become first in the rank of givers. The first truly become last, and the last first.

But the little incident of the widow and her two mites, which outweighed the gifts of the rich, may be so contemplated as to yield even a nobler lesson than the one connected with giving of offerings which it teaches so plainly and unmistakably.

There is more than one kind of riches, there is more than one kind of poverty, there is more than one kind of giving. The offerings of God mean more than gold and silver and pence.

There are some riches that are common to people of all ranks. Amongst both the rich and the poor, there may be the riches of mental endowment; there may be the riches of a contented disposition; there may be the riches of bodily health; there may be the riches of personal form and comeliness. There may be, too, various sorts of poverty. There may be the poverty of a mind doomed by its natural dulness to abide in ignorance; there may be the poverty of a spirit prone to sadness and melancholy, given always to indulge in gloomy forebodings; there may be the poverty of a frame diseased, and

heir to many ills ; there may be the poverty of a bodily presence mean and contemptible, lacking all beauty and grace. But of all, whether their mental and bodily endowments be abundant or scanty, there is one offering required. It is required by God. It is the offering of the whole life to him. And though we should expect that what is offered should be offered in accordance with the gospel rule, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required," is it not too often otherwise? How oft, alas ! have the energies of a soul nobly endowed been devoted to the service of an earthly king, while the King of heaven has been forgotten and unserved ! How oft have the sweetest-tempered and most genial of men, in their light-hearted pursuit of pleasure, forgotten the Lord who gave them what he looked to have returned to him ! How oft have health and strength of body been allied to feebleness of spiritual life, and been accompanied by no self-consecration to God ! How oft have the riches of personal beauty which the Lord would fain have had offered up to him to be further enriched with the beauty and the purity which come from beholding his face, — how oft have they become the willing slaves of sensual delights ! On the other hand, have there not been some of the most devoted servants of the Lord who have had little else to bring to him than a humble and contrite spirit, — who have been unlearned and simple, and yet by quiet perseverance in the well-doing possible both to the wise and the simple, have attained to that which passeth all understanding? Have there not been sad, desponding souls, who, by bringing

their burdened lives to Christ, have found rest and peace, and the power to bear the yoke of sorrow? Have there not been afflicted ones whose weary lives have been offered to God, and whose souls have been thereby richly blessed? Have there not been others who with no personal qualities to give them favor in the eyes of men, — who with weak bodily presence, and speech rude and contemptible, have yet found favor with God, and have lived so as to glorify him abundantly?

In more ways than one the first may become last, and the last first. The poor ones of this world, bereft of natural endowments, widowed of earthly grace, may cast into the treasury of the Lord offerings more than all they who give of their abundance.

XXXV.

Thirtieth Day of Lent.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

REV. H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, A.M.

My sin is ever before me. — Ps. li. 3.

THE first step in true repentance is to find out our sin ; to see it, to feel convinced how vile and hideous and sorrowful it is, and so to feel sorrow for it. So long as we think we are well enough, not worse than others, not doing harm to any one, we shall never repent. A man with

heart-disease, who does not believe in his illness, takes no care of himself, but goes about saying, "See how strong I am," till one day he falls down dead. So with the sinner who has not become convinced of his sin. Well, if repentance is so important a thing, when ought we to begin to repent? Dare we talk about *to-morrow*, or a more convenient season? There is only one word for you and me : that word is Now. The Devil's favorite plan for ruining souls is to lead us to put off our repentance. He does not care about our being unbelievers ; he tells us that the Bible is true, that there is a God, that the promises of pardon and of punishment, the assurance of heaven or hell, are all true, but *there is no hurry*. He lets us believe that repentance is quite necessary, but that there is no hurry about it. Be on your guard against this temptation.

You must have heard of sudden deaths, and of souls cut off without a moment's preparation, too often to believe the enemy when he tells you that *there is no hurry*. You, my young brethren, do not let the pleasures and amusements of life make you forget more serious matters. I heard lately of a young girl whose whole heart was given up to the pleasures of society. Returning one night from a dance, she said to her mother, " My next dress shall be a white one." She spoke truth : within three weeks she died of fever, and her next dress was the white shroud of the old, old fashion, death. Let us try to take the first step in repentance, by seeing that we have something to repent of. The way to find out our sins is to examine ourselves. Now, of all duties, self-examination is one of

the most neglected. We all like to look at the good things we have done. We are never tired of reading flattering letters and testimonials to our merit, but we do not like to look our sins in the face. We do not like to let the light in upon the secret corners and neglected places of our inner life. We keep them closely shut up, like a foul, unwholesome room; and, like the room, the longer they are kept from the light and air, the worse they become. Self-examination is an unpleasant duty at first, without doubt. Conscience is an honest friend who does not flatter, and our favorite vices and faults receive names which we like ill to hear.

The searching into the dark corners of our hearts is always distasteful. A writer says truly, "No one ever tried to sweep away the devil's dust without getting choked with some of it." But self-examination becomes less troublesome as we persevere with it. I have heard of a man who began to examine himself in this way. He took two sheets of writing-paper, one gilt-edged, and the other black-edged. He began to write down on the gilt-edged paper all the good acts which he could remember to have done, whilst the black-edged sheet was reserved for sins. He began with the good things first, — we always do so, — but he found that the paper was not so quickly filled as he expected. Then he turned to the other paper, and found that the list of wrong things done and said and thought grew very rapidly. When he looked at the list of good things again, he discovered that many of them had been done from a wrong motive, and ought to be transferred to the black-edged paper. Many things, too, which had

seemed very good at first, on second thoughts appeared doubtful ; and at last the black-edged paper was as full as it could be, whilst plenty of room remained on the other. Some such plan as this would be very useful to a beginner in self-examination.

What we want to do is to get hold of our sin or sins, and to look them in the face. They tell us that after his great fall, David wrote his sins upon the palms of his hands, that he might ever behold them, as he says, "my sin is ever before me." It is only when we see our faults thus, that we shall turn to the love and mercy of Jesus for pardon. A very old Jewish legend relates, that when Absalom perished, David saw hell opened, and his son tormented in the lowest place. There are said to be seven divisions in the place of torment ; and, when David, in his agony of sorrow, cried, "O Absalom, my son, my son !" he uttered his name or title seven times, and at each cry of love, Absalom was delivered from one of the mansions of the lost. Dear brethren, let us believe that though we may have fallen into the nethermost hell of sin, yet, on our true repentance, the great love of Jesus will draw us forth once more into the land of righteousness.

When we begin to examine ourselves, we need a guide, a standard by which we may measure our acts. We have such a standard in God's law, as written in the Ten Commandments. Now, I know that many people have a wrong notion about those commandments. They either regard them as being written for the Jews long ago, and as being out of date now ; or else they take them liter-

ally, and think that if they have kept the *letter of the law*, all is well. Brethren, it is the *spirit*, not the *letter*, of the law, which we have to do with. These laws of God are for all time, and for all people; and we shall find, when we try ourselves by their standard, that we have sinned when we least thought it.

Try yourselves with these solemn questions, remembering that God's laws are for *you*, and *to-day*; and may God help you to see your sin, and to repent of it, for Jesus Christ's sake!

XXXVI.

Thirty-first Day of Lent.

MARRIAGE AT CANA.

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, A.M.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him. — JOHN ii. 11.

THE second chapter of St. John's Gospel begins by telling us of the first miracle which Jesus wrought.

Now, it is worth while noting, in order that we may get from the narrative the lesson it is intended to convey in all its completeness, that a Hebrew wedding was celebrated in a very festive and joyous manner. A feast is given in the bridegroom's house. Neighbors and friends are invited. They come clad in appropriate garments. They

feast merrily. As soon as the sun has gone down, the bridegroom and his friends set out in joyful procession, accompanied by singers and torch-bearers, to escort the bride to her new home. She returns with them, wearing a long veil of pure white, and crowned with flowers. The festivities are prolonged for as many as seven days,—sometimes even for a longer time; and the feasting is accompanied by the singing of songs and by pleasant games.

Festivity such as this, Jesus and his disciples come to share in. Let us remember that the friends of Jesus and Mary, at whose house these marriage festivities are taking place, are most likely poor. It is quite natural, when the poor gather together for the purpose of merry-making, that one and all should contribute food or wine to the feast. Such is perhaps the case at the marriage feast we are now considering. We read that after a while, when the wine runs short, the mother of Jesus says to him, "They have no wine." She doubtless takes a friendly interest in all the arrangements made for securing the success of the festivities; her quick eye has seen that the wine will soon cease to flow; and her kindly feeling towards her friends prompts her to try to secure that the feast shall not begin to flag for lack of wine. She knows that as yet her Son has not brought any contribution to the festivities; so she comes to him, and quietly tells him that there is no wine, as if to suggest that it will be a graceful act on his part to provide some for her friends. Jesus says unto her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." The Eng-

lish translation gives a harshness to the words which, in the original, they have not. If we were to read, "Dear lady, what have I to do with thee?" or "Dear lady, this care is altogether mine," we should get nearer to the sense of the original.

Mary does not reply. She is the handmaid of the Lord. It is for her to wait and see. So she stores up in her heart the words her Divine Son now addresses to her. That she is not displeased, her own words to the servants show: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." She possibly feels an inward assurance that in his own way he is going to help on the festivity in which he is sharing; and so she bids the servants be ready to do his will.

Now, there are standing near the door of the dwelling six stone vessels, with water in them so that the guests may lave their hands before sitting down to eat. These Jesus bids the servants fill with fresh water. And they fill them up to the brim. He saith unto them, "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast." He, tasting it, finds that it is wine.

At this beginning of miracles, my text tells us, Jesus manifested forth his glory. And his disciples, beholding his glory,—the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,—believed on him. This was the beginning of the manifestation of his Divine glory by miraculous means; but it was not the beginning of the glory itself. That had been ever with him. In that quiet home in the flowery vale of Nazareth, where he grew up by the Virgin's side, increasing in wisdom and in favor with God

and man, the Divine glory abode with him just as much as during the three short years devoted to his divine mission. As the son of the carpenter, working at the lowly trade himself, he dwelt among his kinsfolk ; and in him they saw naught but grace and truth. The Divine glory was with him alike when he manifested it forth by working a mighty miracle, and when he simply went about doing good. It did not suddenly light upon him from heaven, to speedily return whence it had come, but was with him unceasingly. The power also of showing forth his glory had been his since his birth ; that was not a new addition to his heavenly endowments. But hitherto it had not revealed itself to human gaze in any startling guise, such as we read of in the story of this wedding feast. And yet there had been something divine underlying our Lord's early life of loving obedience ; and it is for us who acknowledge Jesus as both God and man, to recognize his divinity even when veiled the most by his humanity. The Divine glory, which so far had only been recognized as the perfection of human grace, suddenly burst forth in a wonderful way, — suddenly became visible in a miracle. The miracle was performed, not that men might be lost in wonder at the deed itself, but that thereby the glory of Jesus might be manifested to them, — the glory which lay infolded within his daily life of goodness and love.

And thus, my friends, may we rise to one of the grand lessons which this wonderful Gospel story teaches us, — that a miracle is not performed that we may behold the Divine power only in the miracle, but to manifest to us

the everlasting glory of the Lord ; the ever-present love and power which at all times are working, though ever so slowly and silently, for the good of mankind. That we may know and confess that our eyesight is a gift from the Lord, we are led at one time to contemplate the Divine Son of God opening the eyes of one who was born blind. That we may give glory to God for the powers of mind with which he has endowed us, and recognize his guiding hand in the slow restoration to reason of those whom madness has assailed, we see Jesus at other times healing those possessed with evil spirits. That we may ever give thanks to Him from whom we receive our daily bread, we are led to the hill-side, to see Christ the Lord dispense the loaves miraculously multiplied to the hungry multitude. That we may acknowledge that it is God's blessing upon our daily toil which enables it to yield us what we require for our worldly well-being, we are taken to the side of the lake of Gennesaret, to see the fishermen, who had toiled all night and taken nothing, let down their nets again at our Lord's bidding, and at once enclose a great multitude of fishes. That we may ever be mindful that the Lord is constantly at work turning water into wine on every vine-clad slope, as he ripens the sap into the rich juice of the grape, we are bidden to come to the humble wedding-feast, where, at the word of Jesus, water-pots filled with water yield a supply of richest wine.

Let us not forget, my friends, the great lesson which Christ's miracles teach us. Let the thought that God is ever about our path, ordering our ways and working for

our good, ever be present in our minds, so that we may not miss the divineness and the glory which daily surround us. And as we read of the glory of Christ manifesting itself in miracles, let us ever be mindful that He whom we see so clearly at work on occasions when a law higher than ordinary natural laws comes into play, is all along working for us, though no miracle is seen. If we take this important lesson to heart, the miracle will to us, as it did to the disciples, manifest forth the glory of Christ. We shall see his divineness not simply at the moment when a miracle is performed, but in all the acts of his life, — in his saying, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee,” as when he says, “Rise up and walk ;” in his life of self-sacrifice ; in his forgiveness of his enemies, who knew not what they did ; and most assuredly, in his love for mankind, for whom he died on the shameful cross.

But there is another lesson which the Gospel story we have been dwelling upon teaches us. The presence of our Lord at a wedding adorned and beautified and sanctified the marriage union. He pronounced it to be a holy estate. He raised it from the degradation to which human vileness had dragged it down, and in which human austerity had condemned it to abide. Henceforth, the feelings of the human heart, which the severely religious among the Jews had been in the habit of regarding as carnal and debased, were to be held as sacred. The relationship of husband and wife, and all things involved in that relationship, received at the marriage feast at Cana an exaltation the influence of which we feel in our family life now. Human affection and love, the yearning

of a human heart for the abiding sympathy of another heart, Jesus declared to be holy. He taught—as you all know—that in wedded life we are to see a type of the heavenly life which awaits the soul, “the marriage of the soul to her eternal Lord,” “the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church.” Jesus thus raised marriage from the lowly estate into which it had fallen, to be, in this typical way, of sacramental import.

Again, let us remember that Jesus and his disciples were present, not simply at a marriage, but at a marriage feast,—at a feast prolonged through several days, where wine flowed freely, and voices were uplifted in joyful songs, and the merry-making was hearty and boisterous. So, then, as it was the glory of Christ to declare the sacredness of the marriage union, it was also his glory to assert the sacredness of human enjoyments. Think well upon this, my friends. It may seem strange at first. It did so to the strict Jews in our Lord’s time. They could not understand a religious teacher who kept not aloof from scenes of worldly pleasure-making. They said Jesus came eating and drinking, that he was a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend to publicans and sinners. Both they and the common people could better understand John the Baptist’s claims as a teacher of repentance and righteousness. He lived an ascetic life. He cared not for wine, choice food he despised; he refrained from marriage; he turned all his human feelings into the channel of penitence and mortification; he sacrificed the whole of life for the culture of the inward soul. The Jews could look upon such a life as that with

admiration. But Jesus was a complete puzzle to them. And no wonder. For he came to teach men to live, not a life of austerity out of the world, but a life of godliness in the world. He came to teach men to lead a new life — a life supernatural and heavenly, it is true, but not unnatural and unearthly — a life in which the supernatural and the heavenly caught up, as it were, the natural and the earthly, and consecrated them. He thus taught us to consider that Christian perfection is best arrived at, not by purposely inwrapping ourselves in sternness and gloom, but by accepting with thankfulness life's gentle pleasures, as we accept with resignation all its chastening sorrows.

The last lesson the marriage-feast and the miracle thereat teach us is one I will touch upon but briefly. Christ entered the lowly dwelling in Cana, and turned water into wine. There is another lowly dwelling into which Christ is ever desirous to enter, — the human soul. "Behold," he says, "I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Yes, my friends, Christ will come to us, — will pass over the humble threshold of our hearts, will abide with us, and enrich us with blessedness and joy. He will bestow upon us a consecration we are in need of. He will turn our poor earthly joys, that fade away as the flower of the field, into heavenly joys that bloom forever. He will turn what is common into what is noble, what is impure into what is pure, what is unholy into what is holy. He will bless our cup of earthly gladness so that it shall run

over with heavenly joy. He will turn the water of our earthly life into heavenly wine.

XXXVII.

Thirty-second Day of Lent.

PENITENTIAL CONFESSION.

REV. H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, A.M.

I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.—Ps. xxxii. 5.

I HAVE read of a simple countryman who bought a telescope, never having seen one before. In using it he put the wrong end to his eye. Presently his wife with her unassisted sight saw a wild bull coming, and warned her husband to escape. But the countryman, looking through his telescope, declared that the bull was five miles off, and that there was plenty of time; and the next moment he was tossed in the air. Ah! brethren, how many of us are looking at the future through the wrong end of the telescope! Now I want you to go on in the way of repentance, by confessing your sins to God. It is not enough to confess that you are sinners; it is not enough to call yourselves miserable sinners, and to say with a sigh that you are not what you should be. Why are we not? Because we are contented to remain as we are. There are people who tell us they are great sinners,

as though it were a natural and right thing that they should be. These persons who parade their sinfulness generally before others are the least likely to look their sins in the face, and to confess them to God. What you have to do is to take your sins *by name* to God, one by one. You must know them first individually, and then you must confess them individually. There are three forms of confession which you may use, — a general and public confession in church, a private confession which you make to God when you kneel to pray at home, and a private confession under special circumstances to God's priest.

I speak first of the General Confession, which you find in your Prayer-books in the Morning and Evening Service. Now, you have *said* this confession hundreds of times. How often have you *felt* it, *meant* it, *realized* it? Think what a sin it is to kneel down, to call on God in heaven to hear your confession, and then to utter the words without thinking about them, or feeling them! And yet you know that you have done this often. I have heard of two women in church who had been talking and thinking of their dress, and when the confession began they looked at their prayer-books, and found them upside down. Dear friends, when we pretend to confess our sins to God in church, are not many of our prayer-books, yes, and our prayers too, *upside down*? When you said the words of the General Confession just now, of what were you thinking? You said, "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep." Did you think *when* and *how* you had strayed out of God's way,

the way of holiness? "We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts." Did you try to recall the special desire which was wrong, yet which you followed? Did you try to remember against what holy law you had offended, what things you had done amiss, what duties you had left undone? Or were you thinking of your neighbor's dress, or to-morrow's work or to-morrow's pleasure? Be honest with yourselves. Perhaps you were thinking how exactly the confession suited your neighbor. That man who owes you money, *he* has wandered like a lost sheep! that acquaintance who slighted you, *she* has done what she ought not to have done! Ah! brethren, but what say you of *yourselves*? You are confessing *your own* sins, remember. Whilst you are thinking of some one else's bad temper, or meanness, or deceit, you are forgetting to look into your own heart, forgetting to recall the last time when *you* were angry or mean or deceitful. There is for us all the great danger that we should get into a habit of saying the confession without thinking at all, or with our thoughts on the faults of others, instead of on our own. Try to mend this, brethren. Get your sin or sins before you, then think of them, think what they must be like in God's eyes, in the eyes of him who died for you: once feel their true character, and you will confess them with your whole heart. I remember once, when preaching at a mission, I noticed a young man in the congregation who was listening with a careless, laughing face. Presently I spoke to the people about confession, as I am speaking to you; and then I knelt down among them, and asked those who

really *felt* what I said, to repeat the confession after me. I heard some one close behind me sobbing ; and when I rose from my knees, I saw that the young man who had laughed at the sermon cried when he confessed his sins to God. Try, then, for the future to make your public confession of sins in church a *reality*, not a mockery, not a sham. But this public confession is not enough. Every night when you kneel to say your private prayers, try to recall the sins, the mistakes, the failures, of the past day, and take them to God. Tell him of the sins of act, and of thought, and of word ; and then, when you have confessed your sin with an earnest resolve to try to do better, you will lie down with the blessed assurance that you are *forgiven*.

There is yet a third form of confession, — that which is made to God's priest. In the exhortation in the Communion Service, people who are in trouble about their spiritual state are bidden to come to God's priest, "and open their grief, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word they may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of their conscience, and avoiding all scruple and doubtfulness." Now, without doubt, there are times when this kind of confession is absolutely necessary. People often say, "I can confess my sins to God ;" but the question is, *Do* you confess your sins to God? What think you of the way in which some of you have pretended to confess to God for years past? There are, believe me, times when the help of a friend and adviser, one a sinner like ourselves, one tempted like as you are, yet one whose life is

dedicated to the ministry of holy things, is requisite. I would not have you practise *habitual* confession to a priest. I do not believe in a religious life which is lived merely from one confession to another. Such a life becomes weak, nerveless, unhealthy. It is like a life supported by medicine, instead of by wholesome food. But, as medicine is necessary sometimes, so is this kind of confession. Do not shrink back from this means of grace from a sense of shame ; if you are not ashamed to commit a sin, you ought not to be ashamed to confess it. May God lead you to this second step in the way of repentance, and make you brave !

XXXVIII.

Thirty-third Day of Lent.

DIVES AND HIS BRETHREN.

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, A.M.

I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. — ST. LUKE xvi. 27, 28.

OUR Lord, in narrating the story of the rich man and Lazarus, — that strange story with its first scene laid in this world, its second scene in the world invisible to us, — would use such expressions with regard to the mysterious world beyond this as would best convey his meaning to those to whom he was speaking. Such a term

as "Abraham's bosom" has never been adopted into the phraseology of the Christian Church; but the idea intended to be conveyed by that term — doubtless a familiar one to the Jews who looked forward hopefully to a life beyond the grave — has all along been cherished by Christians. The thought of re-union with the departed has acquired in Christendom a vitality which has never been granted to it in any other of the religions of the world. A Christian looks forward with hope to a life of union in the future world with all he has ever known and loved in this. He looks forward, too, to a union not simply with those from amongst the circle of his own friends who have joined the glorious band of the redeemed, but with those also whom having not seen he has nevertheless loved with a deep abiding love, — with fellow-Christians of his own time, the echo of whose words has reached his ears, the story of whose deeds of charity has brought a thrill of joy to him; and with Christians of all times, whose memory is dear to him; with the saints who have walked this earth, and whose presence is ever haunting his thoughts, whose lives have been such a revelation of divine gentleness and love that to think of them is a tearful delight. All the hopes of this sort which enter into the daily thought of a Christian are summed up, along with other cherished hopes, in the one phrase, "I believe in the communion of saints." Around this there is a rich cluster of longings and fervent desires. The Jews of old — such of them, at all events, as clung closely to the thought of immortality — had the like assurance of the union of the faithful departed in one loving celestial

brotherhood ; and it seemed to them that no phrase had so concentrated in it all their thoughts of loving union with those who had gone before, as the phrase "Abraham's bosom." We ourselves embody the idea of close union on earth in the words "bosom friend." The union of our Lord with the Father is in St. John's Gospel spoken of in like manner : "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." The phrase must be taken as expressive of the most intimate union which could be thought of by the Jews as existing between those who had become united forever with the Lord. Lazarus had entered into that union with those who had gone before him, with all the faithful departed, and with him who was known to the generations which followed him as the father of the faithful and as the friend of God. The rich man had not entered into that union. His thoughts on earth had always been running in one groove, — the groove of self. The texture of his inward spirit had been woven with the threads of pride and thoughtlessness and selfishness. He had lived simply in order to be clothed in purple and fine linen, and to fare sumptuously every day. He had not lived for the sake of any one beyond his house. Why should he trouble himself about a wretched beggar lying at his gate? He saw no reason why. So that when he left this world, there had been wrought into his inner being no feelings of sympathy with those whose lives had been animated with a divine unselfishness and with tenderest human love. And when he reached that bourn whence no traveller returns, he was startled by finding himself conscious that there was a great gulf fixed

between himself and the spirits and souls of the righteous men of old ; that he was sundered from them by an abyss that could not be passed ; that the abode for which he had prepared himself, and in which he could not do other than abide, was far away from the abodes of those whom he was now compelled to recognize as gathered together in a union of exaltation and blessedness. He was more especially startled by finding that the very beggar who had lain at his gate smitten with a lingering disease, and of whose very existence he had done his best to be unconscious, was now the sharer of a higher bliss than he himself was fitted for. There had on earth been a great gulf—a great social chasm—between himself and Lazarus, but that was a chasm which might have been bridged over. It might have been bridged over with sympathy, with charity. He was then rich : Lazarus was poor. He was surrounded by every earthly comfort : Lazarus was in the lowest depth of suffering. If from his abundance he had ministered to the wants of the poor helpless one ; if he had shared some of the good things which were his with Lazarus, whose lot was amongst the evil things of life ; if he had thought for Lazarus, and not simply for himself ; if his thought had manifested itself in loving deeds,—the gulf on earth might have been crossed. But it was not crossed ; and now it was perpetuated in a great and awful gulf, which severed him from the companionship of just and noble souls ; which left him fixed and rooted and bound in fetters to that self to which his whole life on earth had been devoted to minister.

My friends, there is ever a great gulf fixed between

selfishness and love; between that state in which the soul dwells in loveless isolation, and that in which she is enriched with the divine life of charity. If we are not brought into union with one another here, we shall find ourselves severed yonder. If we who live on the sunny side of life here give no heed to the voice of distress which is ever raised by those who live in the cold shade of adversity; if we check all upspringing sympathy; if we put to silence the whisperings of the still small voice within us bidding us act as ministers of consolation to suffering humanity,—we are but helping to widen the gulf between ourselves and those who have entered into a diviner life. Whatever companionship we are preparing ourselves for in that invisible world whither we all are going, there will be none so dreary, so awful, as companionship with self. Whatever tortures we are here preparing for ourselves, there will be none so exquisite as those which will spring up from regrets over a life wasted here, and over deeds of goodness left undone. If the life which has no other aim than the welfare of self, the comfort of self, the pleasure of self, be commenced here, it will be perpetuated in the world to which we are all hastening. The severance which we are initiating here between ourselves and the higher life of humanity will be continued there. The thoughts and desires which here vibrate not in unison with the aspirations of redeemed humanity will there be a torment to us. With such thoughts clinging to us and refusing to depart from us, it will be impossible for us to hold communion with the blessed ones who on earth rose above the life of selfishness, and who in heaven

are ascending into more perfect union with the Lord and with his chosen ones.

But though this Gospel narrative reveals to us the lot of him whom we know by no other designation than the rich man, — reveals his lot to us as one of torment, — reveals his state in the invisible world as one of torturing self-accusation, — there is disclosed to us a gleam of comfort which bids us think of him as one who in Hades, in the hidden place, in the abode of the spirits of men, is not lost to all tender and compassionate feeling. At the close of his piteous appeal to Abraham, his thoughts go back to his father's house on earth, and to his five brethren there. "I pray thee that thou wouldest send Lazarus to my father's house : for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." He had five brethren on earth, dwelling in the enjoyment of riches as he himself had been, living the same selfish life that he had lived, caring not what voice of distress might be uplifted at their gate, thinking only of their own luxurious ease. And there entered into his mind the desire that they should live differently, that they should depart from the selfish ways in which he had walked so steadfastly ; that they should not persevere in that forgetfulness of others which had brought him into a state of dreadful isolation from all ennobling companionship, into a state of awful union with self-torturing thoughts. He would have them enter upon the path of duty and usefulness which he himself had spurned. He would have them begin on earth that life of sympathy and charity from which he was now an outcast ; he would

have them enter upon it while still on earth, in order that they might afterwards progress along it in heaven. He might have desired otherwise. He might have wished that they should continue in the life of selfishness, so that they might be sharers with him in the rewards of selfishness. He might have found some sort of wild delight in dwelling upon the thought that the five who had been brethren with him in thoughtless luxury, in selfish resolves to live in forgetfulness of others, would by and by be brethren with him in the place of torment in which he then abode. But he did not : he thought otherwise. And though his thoughts with regard to them were doubtless torturing thoughts, though the desire that they might escape the doom of isolation from the great life of progressive union with God might be one which would give additional anguish to his soul ; still, that he should be possessed by the sad desire, was better for him than that he should wildly wish for their companionship with him in ruin.

In these words of his in which he entreats that a messenger may be sent to his five brethren, we may see that he had not sunk to the lowest depth of evil possible for a human soul. But the lesson we have to learn for ourselves is one which enjoins us to enter into the divine life of goodness and charity while still on this earth. For, if we do not, we shall find, when we pass to the world beyond this, that a great gulf exists between ourselves and those who are united with one another and with the Lord in holy love ; we shall find ourselves in companionship with torturing thoughts, in companionship with wrathful-

ness, outside the circle of redeemed humanity. O my friends ! let our great aim in this life be to enter into union with the Lord, to live out his divine life of charity and sympathy ; to speak ever the words of love, and to do ever the deeds of love ; and to trust ever in the Lord's guidance ; to believe that union with him now, means union with him and with all his blessedness throughout all eternity : in which union, may you and I enter and ever abide !

XXXIX.

Thirty-fourth Day of Lent.

CHRIST'S NEW COMMANDMENT.

REV. J. W. PARKER, A.M.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. — JOHN xiii. 34.

THE traitor Judas Iscariot had just left the upper room where our Lord and his apostles were assembled the night before the crucifixion. That departure of Judas from our Lord and his faithful ones was in some way a critical time in the order of those circumstances which preceded our Lord's betrayal and death. It has been thought that our Lord's words point to some great victory over sin and the Devil, more than could be well understood by the rest of the disciples, more than we also

can understand. But we can understand how very hateful must have been the presence of Judas at that holy assembly, how the all-holy, sinless Jesus must have shrunk from personal fellowship and communion with one whose fearful wickedness he knew. Judas Iscariot must have been there as the author of evil himself, and his rejection from the holy table in some sort like the rejection of the Devil at our Lord's temptation. Thus the discovery of Judas, though not known at the time by the rest of the disciples, was a new triumph over evil; and the departure of Judas, an acknowledgment of defeat. We may, perhaps, thus gain some insight into the meaning* of our Lord's words on the occasion of Judas's departure: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him."

Our Lord's betrayal unto death was indeed but the setting forth his glory as the Saviour of men. His death was but the introduction to a larger measure of glory. As the Son of man, he would, when lifted up on the cross, draw all men unto him. As the Son of man, exalted to God's right hand, all power and dominion would be given to him. So were the final results of the betrayal in the first place foreshadowed upon the Redeemer's mind, and he spake of that accumulation of glory as already imparted to him. But at that momentous hour it was not long that he left his disciples, even for such divine contemplations. He goes on, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me, and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come, so now I

say unto you." Then follow the words of the text: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." It may be fitting now that we should with all reverence inquire in what sense the commandment was "new" which the Lord then gave. In every sense of the word, indeed, it was not a *new* commandment, that men should love each other. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," was the second great commandment of the law, and that which was the matter of a commandment in the law was so plainly founded on true principles of human nature, that heathens could not fail to recognize it as right that they at least, who were of the same nation, kindred, or family, should live in friendship and love. What, then, is the meaning of this *new* commandment from the Redeemer's lips at this most solemn hour? Are his words suggested by the fearful crime of Judas? that as he fell by yielding to a base temptation, casting away thereby all love for his Master, and giving him to death for the gratification of his covetousness, so the rest of the disciples might learn by his fate the need of being more fully established in mutual love? Or, rather, is it not that he would make the commandment of mutual love *new* by unfolding a higher motive for such love, and still more by setting forth in his passion and death a more divine and perfect example?

Henceforth, then, it would be a duty on the part of all the disciples of Jesus, to cultivate a love according to the type of this the *new* commandment. It would be a matter of thought and care, to distinguish such a love from

all other affections which might bear some resemblance to it. It would not, indeed, be a feeling antagonistic to other affections, by which men are drawn together, and are kept in love and unity together; it would simply be above and in addition to them. Thus it would be no *new* commandment to urge husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, to love each other; because they stand in so close a relationship to each other, that, apart from the estrangement caused by selfishness, it is *natural* that they should so love each other. Neither is it any *new* commandment, that those who are natives of the same country, and are connected together by common national interests, should have an affection for each other on this ground alone. That men so united should be willing to do and suffer much for each other, is to be accounted for by reasons perfectly natural. Friendships, again, and very close and binding relationships, are created by common sentiments and tastes, and men are led to do noble and self-sacrificing deeds for each other under the impulse of such feelings; but yet all attachments which are obviously based upon such foundations fall short of the requirements of the *new* commandment. None had ever loved his brother as Jesus had loved his disciples. None had loved on the same principle and motive. He loved his disciples — yea, he loved all men — because he wished to save them from sin and hell. And the *new* commandment to his disciples was that they should love each other as he had loved them. Again, in all earthly and natural motives of affection, there would appear to be some obvious reciprocal advantage to be

derived. We love them that love us. But in the love which the Redeemer of men exhibited, there was no limit or reserve. He loved even those who hated him. He died for those who murdered him. They, therefore, who would obey his *new* commandment, will not forget that aspect and feature of the love which he had for men. They will endeavor to cultivate an equally unselfish love. They will seek that entire freedom from low vindictive passions, which will alone suffer the growth within them of so unselfish a love. The Redeemer of men had his love put to the test of death, and it bore that test. So will they who humbly follow his footsteps pray that they may be put to no severity of trial which they may not be able to endure. They will pray that they may sooner die than do any act, or suffer any act to be done, which would be irreconcilable with the presence of a love, perfect in its degree, after the pattern of Christ's *new* commandment.

But there is yet another sense in which our Lord may be understood as giving to his disciples a *new* commandment. He was now upon the very point of instituting the sacrament of his body and blood, in the institution of which his words were in all respects a *new* commandment. "This do in remembrance of me." It would seem that an act of love so amazing in its performance, and in its results so world-embracing, as the death of the Son of God for man's sins, should not be left to the unassisted memory of man, to be borne in mind by each generation of men, or by each individual. He himself was not content to give a charge to his disciples that they should

think about, or speak to each other about his death. They must also "do" what he told them to "do" in remembrance of him, and that "act" which they would do would be the truest memorial of his death. By diligently and with devoutest reverence observing his commandment, they would also learn to estimate in some degree the extent of his love for them. So would they also have before their minds a pattern of that love which they should have for each other. Thus we discern that in the blessed sacrament of his body and blood, our Lord designed that his disciples should seek and find a perpetual nutriment and sustenance to the highest and holiest aspirations of their regenerated nature. *In it* would they be united mystically, but really, with him, their sinful bodies made clean by his body, and their souls washed with his most precious blood. *In it* would they be most effectually united with each other, inasmuch as all would be one body, as all were "partakers of that one bread."

Let us seek, then, brethren, to fulfil the *new* commandment of Christ, and love one another. Let us seek to make all our communions with him have an intimate practical bearing upon our thoughts and daily actions, moulding and tempering them in accordance with the mind of Christ. If we are earnestly striving to grow in the love of God and man, let us not make the mistake of choosing our own way of promoting that growth. If God has condescended to unfold to us the mystery of our soul's life, how it lives, and how sustenance is administered to it, it would be supreme folly to overlook his advice. But surely he has so advised us. As surely as Jesus Christ

came into the world, and died upon the cross, so surely has he *taught* by precept, by parable, by the last bequest of his love, the institution of the holy sacrament of love, that he himself, by a mystical indwelling, is the spiritual life of his disciples. Such being his teaching, what can be our duty but obedience? We cannot compound for such obedience by strength of mind, by skill in controversy, or by any subtilty of misinterpretation applied to the Redeemer's words. We shall grow in love, if we obey. We shall keep the *new* commandment, if we have the *spirit* to keep it. We shall acquire and retain the spirit by reverentially honoring, not despising or profanely, carelessly, and irregularly using, the means which Christ himself appointed and consecrated; namely, prayer and the holy sacraments.

XL.

Sunday before Easter.

REDEEMING GRACE.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. — 2 COR. viii. 9.

SOME become poor through misfortune, some through improvidence, some through criminal indulgence, some through stanch adherence to duty. Here we are reminded

of One who was originally rich beyond all human conception, but became poorer than the poorest that ever trod the earth — not because he desired the change, nor because he could not help it, nor because it was his bounden duty, nor because a superior bade him, nor because the perishing implored him, but because he loved us with an infinite love — beyond all imagination of men or angels.

“’Twas mercy moved his heavenly mind,
And pity brought him down.”

What saw he in this revolted province of his boundless empire, that he should come to seek and save the self-destroyed? Among all the myriads of Adam’s children, what one quality was there worthy of his love? Who solicited his aid, or repented of his own sin? What obligation pressed or necessity impelled the Saviour? Had he remained indifferent to our helpless woes in the heavenly mansions, who could have impeached one of his perfections? Had he smitten this guilty planet from its orbit, and sent it staggering among the stars — a reprobate world — a warning to the universe of the ruin wrought by sin — might not the minstrelsy of heaven have chanted over its catastrophe — “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!” Perfectly he foreknew all that awaited him in his mission of mercy; yet with what divine alacrity did he vacate his throne, leave the bosom of his Father, and retire from the adoring host of heaven — as if a loftier throne, a more loving bosom, and a worthier concourse of worshippers, were ready to greet him in the world to which he came!

“ Oh, love that passeth knowledge ! words are vain !
Language is lost in wonder so divine ! ”

How much we commiserate the poor who have seen better days ! His better days what human art shall depict or finite mind conceive ? Lift up your thoughts to the glorious state of the Eternal Son in the bosom of God the Father. As yet the worlds are not ; no star reflects his smile, nor seraph chants his praise ; but, possessed of every Divine excellence in the most transcendent degree, he has within himself an infinite source of happiness. Now he arises to the work of creation, and myriads of self-luminous suns, each with his retinue of rejoicing planets, begin their eternal march around his throne. All are his, created by him and for him ; and all their countless billions of rational and immortal beings own him as their supreme Lord, and adore him as the sole giver of every good and perfect gift. Down from all this glory he descended into one of the poorest provinces of his illimitable realm, assuming the frail and suffering nature of its fallen people,

“ And God with God was man with men.”

Having a body and a soul like ours, he was liable to all our temptations and infirmities ; and suffering — the just for the unjust — that he might bring us to God, he became poorer than the poorest of those whom by his poverty he sought to redeem. Surely, had he so chosen, with all the pomp and splendor of royal state, he might have made his advent ; but see ! he comes as the first-born of an obscure family — a stable his birthplace — a manger

his cradle ; through all the years of his youth, subject to his parents, and toiling at Joseph's side with the carpenter's saw and plane ; and when at the age of thirty he enters upon his Messianic mission, having no home but such as a poor fisherman can offer him at Capernaum ; often hungering and thirsting over the fields and fountains of his own creation, everywhere hated for his love and persecuted for his purity ; and at last basely betrayed into the hands of his enemies, abandoned and denied by his disciples, falsely accused of blasphemy, and cruelly condemned to the cross ; while the powers of hell, in all their might and their malice, co-operate with the murderers of the Lord's Anointed ; and the loving Father, laying on him the iniquities of us all, withdraws from the scene of infamous horrors, and leaves the immaculate victim to die alone in the darkness.

“ O Lamb of God ! was ever pain —
Was ever love — like thine ? ”

“ What are a million of human lives,” said the great Napoleon, “ to the scheme of a man like me ? ” Infinitely more sublime was the scheme of Jesus Christ, sacrificing all human interest to his own ambition, but enriching all his followers with the durable riches of righteousness. Benevolence, not ambition, was the grand impulse of his action. To save mankind from sin and Satan — to quicken dead souls with the power of an endless life — he came forth from the Father, sojourned in voluntary exile among rebels, and joyfully laid down his life for their redemption. How much the apostles write of “ the riches

of his grace"! How sweetly they assure us that he "hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him"! He became poorer than we, to make us as rich as himself— joint-heirs with him to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven. Already, indeed, the believer is rich in faith, rich in love, rich in peace, rich in joy, and rich in hope; but when the dear Lord shall return to consummate in glory the salvation thus begun by grace, the saints shall enter with him the everlasting kingdom, satisfied with his likeness and radiant with his joy. Rejoice then, O my brother! in the unsearchable riches of Christ. Is the disinherited enriched by the restoration of his lost estate? Jesus has bought back for us our forfeited possessions, and made them ours by an everlasting covenant. Is the alien child enriched by adoption into the royal household, making him heir to the crown? Brought nigh by redeeming blood, I become interested in all that belongs to my Lord, and whatever he receives from the Father I am to share with him in the kingdom of his glory. His voluntary poverty in my behalf makes him my Brother and associates me with him upon the throne. Taking my earthly station, he raises me to his heavenly honors. Bearing my manifold infirmities, he assures me of a share in his infinite blessedness. Emptying himself of his glory for me, he fills me with all the fulness of God! Thus we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ— not, indeed, in all the amplitude of its extension; nor in all the plenitude of its comprehension; but adequately to our neces-

sity as sinners, and adequately to our duty and privilege as Christians — we know it, and rejoice in it with unspeakable joy. What returns shall we make, or how express our gratitude? Shall we be like him who, having promised Mercury part of his nuts, ate the kernels himself, and gave the god the shells? Shall we not imitate the Macedonian churches, that first gave their own selves to the Lord, and then sent their liberal collections to the poor saints at Jerusalem? When we have given ourselves, what else can we withhold from him who gave all his wealth to enrich us, and has enriched us most by giving us himself?

“The mite my willing hand can give,
At Jesus’ feet I lay;
His grace the tribute will receive,
And Heaven at large repay.”

XLI.

Monday before Easter.

SYMPATHY, HUMAN AND DIVINE.

REV. H. N. GRIMLEY, A.M.

Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. — ST. JOHN xvi. 32.

IN these words we read our Lord’s desire for the sympathy of his earthly brethren, and at the same time

the expression of his assurance of the sympathy of his heavenly Father. The very words which speak so assuredly of his possession of the higher sympathy are thus allied with others which give utterance to his yearning for the lower sympathy. To me it seems, that, if we ponder well these words, we shall find that they indicate that the human heart ought never to be free from desires for both the sympathy from above and the sympathy from around, and that the sympathy which one heart has for another is divinely nurtured, and in kinship with the sympathy which the Lord has for every one of his earthly children. All through our earthly life, we feel the need of the sympathy of our fellows. A yearning for sympathy is one of our great ruling motives. As soon as our inner selves wake up to a higher life, so soon is there roused within us a new craving for sympathy. As soon as that great change comes for each one of us — the change which has so many phases — we are filled also with longings for others to share our awakening with us. Our new-found joy in life is one which impels us to be not content with the possession of it all alone. If we are possessed by the thought that the good Lord has put forth his hand to save our souls from selfishness and sinfulness, we should lose the great blessing bestowed upon us if we were to cherish it in secret isolation. Even when we are most conscious of Divine sympathy, we feel an intense yearning for the sympathy of our fellows. This need for sympathy exercises upon us a compelling influence. It is this which urges us to associate together in various ways. It is this which has given rise to our family gatherings at

festive times ; it is this need which brings us together to join in Christian worship. What a void there would be in life if we were altogether to forsake the assembling of ourselves together ; if we were never to realize the Divine words, "where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them ;" if we were never made glad by hearing the voices of friendly ones say unto us, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." Though we commune with the Lord in the still chambers of our own hearts, and find a joy in doing so ; though we strive in the great cathedral of nature to enter into the communion of praise which, to the devout soul, all created things seem ceaselessly to pour forth unto the Lord, — we have other longings which are only satisfied when we come together to lift up our voices one with another in prayer and praise. Though we can read our Bibles in solitariness and quietness ; though we can read the noble thoughts which reverent souls, divinely aided, have inscribed on the pages of the books which have become our constant companions, our unfailing solace, — we nevertheless desire to hear the divine message as it quivers on human lips ; we long to hear the thoughts of another uttered with the varying tones of the human voice, and to note the very look and gesture which in some strange way accord with the inner meaning of the spoken words.

Of all this need of human sympathy, our dear Lord is conscious. He is conscious of it, because he has felt it himself. During his life on earth, the sympathy he finds is precious to him. His home at Nazareth, in which he finds the sympathy of a human mother, is a home he

thinks of tenderly. The home at Bethany, of the two sisters and brother whom he loves so much, and whose love for him is great, is a retreat in which he finds sympathy which is dear to him. He rejoices that amongst his disciples there is one whom he can more especially love. And when, on the night of sorrows, he is contemplating the hour fast approaching, when his disciples shall leave him alone, he shrinks from the loneliness to which their desertion will leave him.

And as, when himself on earth, he sets all this value upon human sympathy, and feels all the need for it, so now is he conscious of all the yearnings of his brothers and sisters on earth for the loving sympathy of others. He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He knows how much longing for sympathy there is in the world, which is never satisfied. He knows that the great want of many a heart is the sympathy of a loving friend ; that the great sorrow which casts a shadow upon many a life is that the weary days come and go, bringing no sound of a friendly human voice, no whispered consolation, no communion in high thoughts, no loving salutation to make the heart inwardly leap for joy. He knows of all the aching void of sad and lonely souls, because he himself was often sad and lonely, because he himself yearned for what we yearn for, and loved the tenderness of human life, — the greetings and the converse with which our sympathy is manifested.

But in the very moment in which he expresses his need of human sympathy, he also makes known his assurance of the Divine sympathy of his Father : “ And yet

I am not alone, because the Father is with me." And this Divine sympathy is man's only refuge when human sympathy fails. The consciousness of possessing it is a proof that we have been brought into union with God. An abiding consciousness of its possession is a proof that we ever strive to remain in that union, to grow in that union, to submit ourselves to the Lord's guidance as he draws us into a closer union. To retain a lasting consciousness, not only of having entered into union with the Lord, but also of abiding in that union, is the great work of our Christian lives. It will not do to be content with the thought that on such a day we entered into a sweet consciousness that God had drawn near to us; we must be conscious of a daily growth in God's favor, a daily growth in knowledge of the Lord, a daily inflowing of loving inspirations from his Divine heart.

Knowing, as we do, that our Lord was perfectly human; knowing that in him the Divine entered into complete union with the human, and so foreshadowed for us the union into which we must enter, — knowing this, the human experience of our Lord revealed in my text shows us that we, like him, shall ever feel the need of human sympathy; but that, even when that need is greatest, we may feel also assured of Divine sympathy. They show us, too, when taken along with the main teaching of our Lord's life, that even the assurance of Divine sympathy does not carry us out of the range of human sympathy, does not exalt us into a region where we feel no need for the sympathy of our fellows, does not destroy the yearning within us for communion with

one another. Jesus our Lord, who came to reveal to us how much there is of the human in the Divine, and how much there is of the Divine in regenerated humanity, and to commence the great union of humanity with Divinity, which, since his ascension to glory, his own Divine Spirit has been carrying on on earth, — he by his earthly life teaches us that there can be no goodness in the heart of man which is not a Divine endowment; that the manifestation of charity within the soul which we call sympathy is altogether of a heavenly nature; that the human sympathy for which we are ever craving, the Divine sympathy which we ought ever to strive to be assured of, are but different links of the same golden chain of love which unites heaven with earth, which brings the human into communion with the Divine. Even if we have an assurance of Divine sympathy, such as Jesus felt when he said, “And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me,” our yearning for human sympathy will not be quenched. But there will be awakened within us, if we have this blessed assurance of Divine sympathy, — there will be awakened within us, by the side of our own longings for the sympathy of others, a desire to bestow sympathy where sympathy is needed; a desire to show forth our love to our brothers and sisters whom we see, to those whom we must love if we indeed love the Lord whom with the bodily eye we do not see. And if in sadness of soul we are yearning — and, as we think, hopelessly — for the sympathy of others, let us seek that Divine sympathy, the assurance of which brings consolation to the human heart of our Lord. Let us seek Divine

sympathy, not with the thought of being made independent of human sympathy, but so that we ourselves may have alike our own longings for sympathy deepened and intensified, and our own power of bestowing sympathy made greater, and may become fellow-toilers with our Lord in the work of binding up the broken hearts of his earthly brethren, in bringing to sad and weary souls, to souls laden with remembrance of sin, the message of Divine forgiveness.

And as this morning we, in our solemn eucharistic service, lift up our hearts unto the Lord; as we join our upraised voices with those of angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, in lauding and magnifying the Lord's glorious name, — let us indeed feel assured that the thoughts of our hearts are in sympathy with the thoughts that animate the hearts of the redeemed in the Church above; let us strive inwardly to gain an assurance of the sympathy of the Divine One; let us realize that Christ has drawn near to us to speak to our hearts words of love; let us depart hence with thankful hearts, with hearts resolved to be messengers of Divine love and sympathy to all around us, so that no one in the circle in which we move shall feel alone in a sad and weary world, and that ourselves with all our friends may grow together into the higher Christian life of love, may increase ever in Divine charity, and enter more consciously, every day of our lives, into union with the Lord.

XLII.

Tuesday before Easter.

FÉNELON'S PRAYER.

REV. F. C. EWER, S. T. D.

“O Lord! take thou my heart, for I cannot give it; and when thou hast it, oh! keep it, for I cannot keep it for thee: and save me, in spite of myself, for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*”

SOME time since, in preparing for the holy communion, my eye fell upon this little prayer of the good Bishop Fénelon. It is a prayer for every one of us. Good for the priest, good for the people; and, as this prayer has been a comfort to me, I bring it this morning, and give it to you. It expresses what we all feel, and just what the Christian wants to say. Our hearts are all alike, and as in better moments we realize how we would like to offer ourselves truly to God and be his, yet for all our words we know not exactly how to do it, or whether we have done it, after all, so that we are sure he has accepted, realizing that we would, but cannot truly, give him our hearts. And then, as after we have made the offer in our poor way, and think we can keep the vow, we find ourselves, nevertheless, falling again before our besetting sin; as we feel our impotency, and that we cannot ourselves keep the heart for God which we thought we had given to him; and then, as when we have tried our-

selves with that rigid self-examination by the rule of God's commandments, which the Church requires of every one of her children before he approaches the holy altar, we find, that, in some way or other, we are violating all those commandments, and are thus brought to the realization of what weak sinners we are, how we are constantly losing all claim to salvation through our erring course, and how, nevertheless, we would not that this should all be so after all our prayers, — there is a something left in the breast, a dumb longing that can find no utterance, a somewhat we would say, and yet we know not what. The prayers which we are using in our private worship all suppose a thoroughness in our devotion to God, a completeness in our vows and purposes, which the past tells us and which we feel is not within us ; which we would have, but cannot attain to. There is a lingering want within us, a something that we would say but for the want of language. Oh, how does the little prayer of the good Catholic bishop give voice to the dumb feeling within us ! “ O Lord ! take thou my heart, for I cannot give it ; and when thou hast it, oh ! keep it, for I cannot keep it for thee : and save me in spite of myself, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.” O Christian ! do you feel your weakness, and yet your dependence upon God ; your willingness to cast yourself upon him, and be moulded by him as he would and not as you would, and an earnest desire for salvation ? Here is your prayer ; and like the prayer of the publican that stood afar off, and cried only, “ God be merciful to me a sinner,” it too will be accepted by Heaven as it goes warm from your

breast. "O Lord! take thou my heart, for I cannot give it; and when thou hast it, oh! keep it, for I cannot keep it for thee: and save me in spite of myself, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

Beloved, in the sacrament of the blessed eucharist, one re-dedicates himself to God. The primary meaning of the word "sacrament" is oath. It is an act, then, of solemn vowing. The adult vows himself to God in holy baptism. But after that act we are continually erring. Feeble as we are, we are in need, therefore, of other opportunities, when we may rouse ourselves, and wherein we may strive to give our hearts again and again, through life, more truly to God. To this end he has kindly arranged an opportunity at the blessed sacrifice of the altar. Coming hither, we offer our hearts, which may have wandered: we swear anew our allegiance to God. Nor are we the only agents acting here. There are two actors here, — God, whom we may have forgotten, God whom we have grieved, stands here also to accept the offer, mercifully to forgive the past, and take the poor hearts we bring to him. In the giving by God of the body and blood, in the receiving and consuming by us in faith, the past is forgotten on his part; the oath, the vow, on our part is reiterated; the covenant of life between you and him is sealed anew. As you kneel here, remember, dearly beloved, it is the solemn hour of re-dedication of the heart to God by holy sacrament and by holy oath. Who is there that is equal to the act? Who is there that does not remember how oft he hath given that heart back again to the world? Who is there that

has not again and again broken the vows of his solemn eucharist? Who is there, then, that is worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs of this sacred table? Who is there, that, as he remembers the past, is sure of his heart for the future as he brings it to God? As faltering we draw near, bringing with us those poor uncertain hearts of ours to offer them, let us always remember that God is long-suffering, God is love; and let us come, not too confidently, but with the prayer of the good bishop on our lips, — “O Lord! take thou my heart, for I cannot give it; mercifully make up what I lack.”

But the holy eucharist is not merely a sacrament of re-dedication on our part, and acceptance on the part of God. It is also, on our part, an oath of new resolution through which God gives us strength to enable us to keep our resolutions. And yet how apt we are to waste that supply of strength! how apt are we to forget that there is that within us received here, the holy Christ made one with us, — Christ who is our strength, which, if we will only use it, will enable us to overcome temptation! “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” How apt are we to forget that if we go forth with that within us, with Christ, our great Friend, who has conquered Satan for us, and resist the Devil, God has promised that the Devil will flee from us! If, without the assistance of this Christ, we personally and alone attempt to resist the Devil (he is an archangel, fallen though he is), he is the stronger nature, and we shall be sure to fall. But Christ has conquered him for us. Christ gives himself spiritually to us here to stand by us, nay, within

us ; in the warfare to become, as it were, the soul of our souls ; and if our faith doth not recognize him as within us, he passes as naught to us. And yet, brethren, how wasteful are we, I say, during each month, of the riches of the eucharist ! As we remember our broken resolutions then, and how easily we slip into sin notwithstanding all, and how hard it is for us, as we mingle in the world, prone as we are to forget and neglect God's assistance, to keep the heart for God which we have vowed to him, let us, whenever we approach hither, draw near with the prayer of the good bishop on our lips, — “ O Lord ! take thou my heart, for I cannot give it ; and when thou hast it, oh ! keep it, for I cannot keep it for thee.” But the blessed eucharist is not only a holy oath of re-dedication on our part, and re-acceptance on God's part ; and it is not only the binding on our part of fresh resolutions, and on God's the imparting of strength toward the keeping of our resolutions : but it is that sacrament whereby we receive all other benefits of Christ's passion. For Christ's work is twofold, — general and particular, — what he did for all, and what he does for each. On the cross he died for all generally ; in this blessed eucharist he applies himself and the merits of his cross to the private soul of one by one, while on the cross his is the general title and office of the Saviour of the world. But at the holy table he draws near, and is personally the Saviour of each, applying his broken body to each one. It is to the blessed eucharist that we, as separate Christians, come, as a means through which we may gain streams of salvation from the cross. It is in the blessed eucharist that

God looks upon the cross we there plead before him, and saves us through Christ. And as we approach this holy sacrament, feeling that we would offer our hearts better than we can, and conscious of our weakness, conscious of our unsteadiness of purpose when we have offered; conscious that though in better moments we would be obedient, yet in weaker moments we are too often, alas! willingly disobedient; that we would keep our hearts true, but cannot; and that, if we are to be saved, God must do the most of it himself,—let us come with the full prayer on our lips. Let it be always with us in our pews before we arise to approach. Let us breathe it as we draw near and fall on our knees,—“O Lord! now take thou my soul, for I cannot give it; and when thou hast it, oh! keep it, for I cannot keep it for thee: and save me in spite of myself, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.”

XLIII.

Wednesday before Easter.

GOD’S LOVE TO MAN.

REV. F. W. FABER, D.D.

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.—1 JOHN iv. 16.

REASON and revelation, science and theology, nature, grace, and glory, alike establish the infallible truth, that

God loves his own creatures, and loves them only as God can love. The question is, why he loves us ; and our first step towards an answer must be to examine the character and degree of this love. Let us see what God's love of us is like.

In the first place, it passes all example. We have nothing to measure it by, nothing to compare it with. It is without parallel, without similitude. It is based upon his own eternal goodness, which we do not understand. This leads us to its next feature, that it does not resemble human love, either in kind or in degree. It does not answer to the description of a creature's love. It manifests itself in different ways. It cannot be judged by the same principles. We cannot rise to the idea of it by successive steps of greater or less human love. The ties of paternal, fraternal, conjugal affection all express truths about the Divine love ; but they not only express them in a very imperfect way, they also fall infinitely short of the real truth, of the whole truth. This is our third feature of it, that not even a glorified soul can ever understand it. If even they who see God cannot comprehend his love, what manner of love must it necessarily be ? And yet it is ours, our own possession ; and God's one desire is, by hourly influxes of grace, to increase that which is already incalculable, to enrich us with an apparently unspeakable abundance of that whose least degree is beyond the science of archangels. It is another feature of this love, that it seems so to possess God as to make him insensible to reduplicated wrongs, and to set one attribute against another. There is nothing like

God's love, except God's unity. It is the whole of God. Mercy must be risked by the permission of evil. That choice perfection of the Most High, his intolerably shining sanctity, must be exposed to inevitable outrage by the freedom of created wills. Only love must be satisfied. The most stupendous schemes of redemption shall seem to tax the infinity of wisdom so as to satisfy justice, provided only that the satisfaction be not made at the expense of love. Love appears—oh these poor human words!—to stand out from the equality of the Divine perfections. Yet even love, for love's own sake, will come down from the eminence of its dignity. It will take man's love as a return for itself. It will count that for a return, which bears no resemblance to the thing returned, either in kind or in degree. The mutual love of God and man is truly a friendship, of which the reciprocity is all on one side. Compared to the least fraction of God's enormous love of us, what is all the collective love he receives from angels, and from men, but as less than the least drop in the boundless sea! Hence we may well reckon as a fifth feature of this love, that its grandeur is a trial even to the faith which finds no difficulty in the mystery of the undivided Trinity. If we have had to work for God, have we not found more men puzzled and tempted by the love of God, than by any other article of the faith? Indeed, most of the temptations against the faith, when properly analyzed, resolve themselves into temptations arising from the seeming excesses of Divine love. It is the excessive love of the incarnation and the passion, which makes men find it hard to believe those

mysteries. We confess it seems to us that he who, on reflection, can receive and embrace those two propositions, that God loves us, and that God desires our love, can find nothing difficult hereafter in the wonders of theology. Another feature of this love is, that it is eternal, which is in itself an inexplicable mystery. As there never was a moment when God was not, in all the plenitude of his self-sufficient majesty, so there never was a moment when he did not love us. He loved us not only in the gross as his creatures, not only as atoms in a mass, as units in a multitude, all grouped together and not taken singly ; but he loved us individually. He loved us with all those distinctions and individualities which make us ourselves, and prevent our being any but ourselves. Once more : the seventh feature of this love which God bears us is that it is in every way worthy of himself, and the result of his combined perfections. It would be, of course, an intolerable impiety to suppose the contrary. If it be a finite love, where is its limit? If it went to the crucifixion, who can say where it will not go, if need should be? If it be a love short of immense, who has ever exhausted it? Look at it in heaven at this moment ; it is rolling like countless silver oceans into countless spirits and unnumbered souls. Ages will pass uncounted, and still the fresh tides will roll. If his love be mutable, when did it change? Is a whole past eternity no warrant for its perseverance? Is not fidelity its badge and token, a fidelity which is like no created thing although we call it by a human name? Is it not also a benignant love, a merciful love, a just love? Is it not a love which

directs the whole providence of God, and makes his absolute dominion over us our most perfect freedom? And, finally, is it not its very characteristic, that it should be itself our end, our reward, our consummate joy in God? Thus it is the result of his combined perfections, a sort of beautiful external parable of his incommunicable unity.

XLIV.

Thursday before Easter.

THE MYSTERIOUS AGONY.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. — MATT. xxvi. 38.

WHAT in human literature, ancient or modern — what in Holy Scripture, Old Testament or New — strikes the mind with such tender astonishment as the familiar record of the Redeemer's agony on the last night before his crucifixion? To see stalwart manhood struggling with disease and distracted with pain — to see fragile beauty languishing in consumption and slowly fading from the world — to see innocent childhood writhing in convulsions and stretching out its little hands for aid in the chill waters of death — either of these were a sight sufficiently touching for a tender and sympathetic nature. But to see the immaculate Son of God, the almighty Maker and Sustainer of the universe, in his tabernacle of human flesh,

wrestling with an unknown mental anguish, mysteriously deprecating the crisis of his woe, bathed with a bloody perspiration, and sustained by angelic succor — here is a spectacle which alike moves our compassion and confounds our reason. To such a view we are now invited ; but let us draw near with reverence, for the ground we tread is holy.

Some thirty-five years ago, a book was written to prove that Christ's sufferings were the sufferings no less of his divinity than of his humanity. The argument was an elaborate failure. The doctrine that the divine nature of Jesus suffered is not warranted by any declaration of Holy Scripture, nor can it be deduced thence by any fair process of reasoning. The suffering of the Logos was both unnecessary and impossible : — unnecessary, because, the two natures constituting but one person, the suffering of the inferior would answer all the purposes to be secured by the suffering of the superior ; impossible, because one of the essential attributes of a perfect and infinite spirit must be perfect blessedness, which is incompatible even with the possibility of suffering. The suffering of our blessed Lord, therefore, was the suffering of his humanity only ; and it was of his human spirit he said — “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” What was the cause, and what the nature, of that sorrow ?

Was it the feeling of remorse ? This none can experience but the guilty. Christ did no iniquity, and challenged all his enemies to convict him of sin. There was not a

stain upon his conscience, nor a moral shadow upon his life. Had he been a sinner, how could he have been a Saviour to other sinners? To say that he suffered remorse for the sins of men in his representative character as their legal substitute, is too absurd to require refutation.

Was it the fear of his enemies? All power was his in heaven and earth. Why should he fear the worms he made? Let them surround him by thousands; he can pass through their midst and go his way, or call down fire from heaven to consume them, or bring a legion of angels to scatter them, or make the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, or paralyze the tongue that speaks against him, or the hand put forth to seize him. He has seen times of apparently greater danger than this; but who ever knew him to quail before the malice of persecution or the menace of power?

Was it the dread of a cruel death? To die, he came into the world. To be capable of dying, he assumed our mortal nature. From the first he knew the necessity of his death, and distinctly foresaw its mode, with all its circumstances of torture and of shame. Yet he consented to it; he rejoiced in the prospect. From the throne of the universe, he beheld a cross planted on Calvary; and to embrace that cross, he abdicated that throne. His views and feelings are still unchanged, and Golgotha acquires no terror from its contiguity. Why should He fear death, who is himself the resurrection and the life? Why should He fear death, who by dying is to destroy

him that hath the power of death, and make earth's cemeteries the seed-fields of immortality?

Was it the displeasure of his eternal Father? The thought is blasphemy. Never was the eternal Father displeased with his incarnate Son. Both at his baptism and at his transfiguration, the Father testified of him by a voice from heaven — "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am ever well pleased." God can be displeased with none but sinners, but his Son has never sinned. To say that he was displeased with his Son as the substitute for sinners, is to contradict all that the Scriptures say of his infinite love in sending his Son to be the Saviour of the world. Oh! no; God the Father was never better pleased with his beloved Son, than when that Son came with delight to do his Father's will. Never was he better pleased with him, than when he saw him writhing in the agony of the olive-garden, and sent an angel for his succor.

Was it the penalty of God's violated law? Such is the teaching of a certain school in theology. They say that Christ suffered, in kind and in amount, just what the sinner deserved to suffer, and must have suffered if he had not been redeemed, — all that the whole multitude of his redeemed would have suffered, had they been lost forever. They tell us that the sins of his people are all imputed to him, and he is treated as if he had himself committed them all; that the Almighty Justice gathers all the curses of the broken law into one huge avenging bolt,

and hurls it flaming down upon the soul of his people's Surety. One writer of this class that I have read maintains that Jesus endured in Gethsemane and on Golgotha the actual pains of hell, suffering in a few hours more than all the myriads of fallen angels and reprobate human spirits could possibly suffer to all eternity. The statement of such a theory is its refutation. We know not, indeed, what exquisite refinement of anguish the Redeemer endured in the garden and on the cross ; yet this we know — there was no necessity that his suffering should be infinite, nor equal in amount to the eternal suffering of all the lost, since it is not the measure of the suffering, but the majesty of the Sufferer, and his voluntary surrender as our sacrifice, that renders the dread endurance sufficiently meritorious for the salvation of all mankind.

Some think his grief was that only of a pure and benevolent heart for the sins and sufferings of the race. That this was an ingredient in his bitter cup, there can be no question ; but this was not all the bitter potion. Already, from the brow of Olivet, had he wept over Jerusalem, with tenderest lamentation anticipating her cruel fate ; and now, when she has finally rejected her gracious visitation, and is ready to consummate her crimes by the crucifixion of the manifest Messiah, his heart melts with unutterable anguish, as he thinks of the blind unbelief and enormous guilt of her reprobate population, and the wrath unto the uttermost soon to fall upon them, scattering them in hopeless exile among the nations, while they continue to discard his redemption, and obstinately adhere to an

abrogated and soulless ceremonial, through all the ages of their retributive captivity. And to this woful picture must be added the vision of Gentile wickedness, the delusions of idolatry, the sacrilege of superstition, the blasphemy of unbelief, the wanton revelry of vice, the suffering of persecuted virtue, the general forgetfulness of God, the bitter scorn of the blood-sealed testament, the horror and hopelessness of guilty death-beds, the terrible judgments poured out upon successive generations of the profligate, the whole dark panorama of human misery down to the end of the world, and the weeping and wailing that ascend evermore from the place of final punishment. All this, with much more that we cannot imagine, may have passed before the omniscient spirit of our Saviour in Gethsemane, constituting one cause of his inconceivable sorrow. But in his agony there was a still deeper and more mysterious significance. A heavier burden pressed him to the earth, and forced the red life through every pore, till "his sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Others attribute our Lord's great sorrow to the Prince of darkness, whose hour was now come, and all whose powers here rallied to the final assault upon the Captain of our salvation. They suppose that in some terrific shape Satan met him in the garden, that through this apparition he "began to be sore amazed and very heavy," and that to strengthen him in some way which we cannot understand for this conflict with "the angel of the bottomless pit" came the "angel from heaven." Without imagining that he had any doubt of the issue, or any fear

of the enemy he had already vanquished, we may rationally suppose that a real encounter with the fallen archangel, though perhaps altogether of a mental character, was another cause of the suffering here recorded. To destroy the works of the Devil came the Son of God into the world. Ever since his personal appearance in our planet, this one aim has occupied his thought and governed all his actions. Now the decisive struggle is at hand. To-morrow, on Mount Calvary, the victory shall be consummated. To-morrow, on Mount Calvary, he shall bruise the old serpent's head beyond all power of healing. With blood-dyed garments, travelling in the greatness of his strength, he shall trample the hosts of hell in his anger, and make them drunk in his fury. Mighty to save, he shall spoil principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them by his cross, and leading captive the captivity of his people. The day of vengeance is in his heart, and the year of his redeemed is come. Satan knows his antagonist, and trembles for his throne. Gathering all his forces to the olive-garden, he plies the Son of God with his heaviest artillery. True, he "hath nothing" in Christ, — no fallen nature upon which he can work, no sinful passion to which he can appeal, no principle of evil ready to act as his ally, no possible means of diverting him from his purpose or defeating his redemption of our race; yet can he inflict upon that sinless human soul an inconceivable amount of suffering; and feeling the utter hopelessness of his own cause, and foreseeing the speedy subversion of his own empire, he arrays his host for battle, and assails

his Conqueror with all the virulence of infernal hate, with all the fury of a desperate revenge, till the appeal to the Father and the perspiration of blood bring down the angel, not to release from the conflict, but to strengthen for the victory.

But was this last struggle with the Wicked One the chief cause of our Saviour's sorrow? I think not, and in all that I have said another has been anticipated. There is not time to dwell upon it at any length, though by far the most important point of all. In the vicarious and sacrificial character of Christ's sufferings, must be found the key to this great mystery. The Scripture proof is clear and ample, that he suffered in our stead, as our substitute, to atone for our sins and procure our salvation. His sufferings began with his human life, and all that he suffered was for human guilt. Almost every variety of affliction to which humanity is liable, except remorse of conscience and the wrath of God, seems to have been wrung into his single cup. But now he suffers as he never suffered before. In the whole history of the Man of sorrows, from its beginning in Bethlehem to its conclusion on Calvary, there is not another scene like this. Now, in his unknown sorrows and sufferings, by him felt, but to us incomprehensible, he pays down the first instalment of our pledged redemption. Why that sore amazement? is it not the anticipated "chastisement of our peace"? Why that mental heaviness? is it not the laying-on of "the iniquity of us all"? Why that exceeding sorrow? is it not the Almighty Justice putting him to

grief? Why that bloody perspiration? is it not the eternal Father bruising him in the wine-press? Why that incomprehensible agony? is it not the travail of his soul for the ransom of ours? Why that thrice-uttered prayer that the cup might pass from him? is it not the mingled cup of all our woes put into his hand that he may drain it to the dregs? Why comes an angel from heaven to succor him in the dread crisis of his enterprise? is not this our true Atlas, bearing the world upon his shoulders, and lifting it out of darkness into the everlasting light? Jesus is suffering, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God; and his sufferings are sufficient to satisfy the demands of justice and procure the pardon of the guilty. The claims of the broken law are as strongly asserted, and the principles of the Divine administration are as thoroughly vindicated, in the sufferings of the legal substitute, as they could have been in the sufferings of the sinner himself; and thus God can be just while he justifies the believer in Jesus, fully sustaining the law while he exercises mercy to the transgressor. The Father's infliction of anguish inconceivable upon his own beloved Son is a more appalling exhibition of his hatred to sin and his purpose to punish the sinner — a more emphatic affirmation of his regard for his own righteous government, and his jealousy for the purity and happiness of the moral universe — a more powerful appeal to the conscience of mankind, a more effectual preventive of evil-doing, and a more glorious guard to virtue — than could have been furnished in the utter reprobation and ruin of the whole apostate race. Had all the teeming millions of earth's

guilty population, from Adam to his latest son, been cast alive into the lake of fire, their hopeless anguish would have been a far less impressive display of the Divine holiness than the agony and bloody sweat of Jehovah's Fellow in Gethsemane; and their weeping and wailing through all the ages of reverseless doom would have been a far less terrific demonstration of the Divine justice than the supplication of the well-beloved Sufferer, — "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" Doubtless Jesus endured as keen if not as complicate an anguish while he lay struggling upon the turf, as when he hung writhing upon the tree; and if the mighty atonement which reconciles heaven and earth was completed on Calvary, it was at least begun in Gethsemane.

XLV.

Good Friday Morning.

THE GREAT SACRIFICE.

REV. J. CROSS, D.D., LL.D.

He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. — ISA. liii. 5.

WITH the whole Church, we gather to-day around the cross. With the whole multitude of the redeemed, we come to gaze upon a sight, such as our world has wit-

nessed but once, and can never witness again. Seven hundred years before the event, the prophet delineates the scene, as if it were actually present to his view; with a few inimitable touches depicting the humiliation and anguish of the Divine Sufferer, and investing the symbol of unutterable shame with a glory too bright for our unshaded eyes. This chapter is the most precious Calvary token of the Old Testament, and our text embodies the whole mystery of human redemption: "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

There is a certain vague, confused, and palpably inconsistent theory of religion, which teaches that God forgives the sinner for his contrition, for his reformation, for his punitive sufferings, for his meritorious sacrifices, or for his well-doing at one time to make amends for his ill-doing at another. Nothing could be more violently contradictory of Holy Scripture. Creature merit is an absurdity. How can he who owes all he has and all he is to God render to him any thing beyond his sovereign claim as Creator? How, then, can the merit of a sinful creature, who has hitherto withholden from God his own, every thing he claims of love and obedience, be conceived of as within the limits of possibility? What virtue can there be in penitential tears to wash away the crimes of the past? what power in the correction of evil habits to undo the mischief already done? what efficacy in the penalty of violated law to repair the wrong for

which it is inflicted? what moral value in self-denial or suffering to set over against the guilt of former self-indulgence? or what magical influence in a present service, always due, to satisfy the rigid demands of Heaven for the constant delinquency of many years? Nay, "without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins;" and it must be the blood of an immaculate victim, such as cannot be found among the sons of men; yet must that victim possess our nature, in order to be our proper representative, and suffer in our stead; but he must also be divine, since naught less than divinity can, by voluntary suffering, merit Divine mercy for the guilty, and reconcile Eternal Justice to the fallen and rebellious. None but "God manifest in the flesh" can meet these demands; and "God manifest in the flesh" has actually met them, and "become the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." And no man depending upon any other merit or mediation for pardon, holiness, and eternal life, has accepted God's method for the recovery of the lost; for the Bible, the whole Bible, from the tragical story of Abel in Genesis to the thunder-chant of the innumerable ransomed in the Revelation, everywhere insists upon the salvation of sinners through this Divine Sacrifice offered once for all; and we must renounce the word of God, or cling to the cross of Christ.

And within the limits of humanity, this one sacrifice is universally available. The Son of God, in the likeness of sinful flesh suffering for human sin, represents every single individual sinner, as truly as if there were not another in the universe. He "gave himself a ransom for

all," a "propitiation for the sins of the whole world." All the ends of the earth he invites to look unto him and be saved. All who labor and are heavy laden he calls to come unto him for rest. And all who come are assured of his ability to save them unto the uttermost ; and none who come shall be cast out, or turned unheeded away. And to you, my brethren ! to every one of you, O my sinful brethren ! is the word of this salvation sent ; and every man who hears the message is as much personally interested in the announcement as if, of all the world, it were sent to him alone ; yea, as much as if his name had been placarded by angel hands with Pilate's inscription upon the cross, as the one only sinner that Jesus died to save. Accept, then, this precious sacrifice ; believe in Christ as your own sufficient Saviour ; and in proof of your faith, yield yourself soul and body to him in humble and hearty obedience. Come and consecrate yourself to his service in an everlasting covenant. Come and receive the promised seal of the heavenly Paraclete in the laying-on of hands. Come and eat the flesh and drink the blood given for the life of the world. Come without any preparation, but that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream ;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him."

Fifty pence or five hundred, your debt shall be freely and fully forgiven. Your eternal Surety cannot fail, though the earth dissolve and the heavens pass away. All equally

need his redemption, and all may equally enjoy the unspeakable mercy. Not in your own merit, but in the merit of the Crucified, you stand accepted before God, and enter into the fellowship of eternal life.

To-day the marshalled hosts of the faithful march to a melancholy strain, and all their banners are emblazoned with the bloody symbol of the cross. Who is heedless of the spectacle? Let him not talk of religion. Religion to him is but an empty name. The man who is indifferent to the cross has no religion; let him not deceive himself by an unmeaning word. Religion is sympathy with Christ, an alliance with the living God through the sacrifice of the cross. A Christianity without the cross is a planet without a sun. In the cross all truth concentrates; from the cross all charity radiates; around the cross all virtue thrives, and blossoms beneath its crimson dew. Here the true-hearted find the source of life, the strength of action, the means of victory, and the pledge of eternal mercy. St. Paul calls it "the wisdom of God and the power of God;" and with all philosophy at his feet, and all poetry on his tongue, and all miracles awaiting his word, and the unspeakable utterances of the third heaven still echoing in his soul, he determines to glory in nothing but the cross of Christ. To know Christ and him crucified, this is the transcendent science, and the burden of the immortal song. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

XLVI.

Good Friday Evening.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

REV. H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, A.M.

They crucified him. — LUKE xxiii. 33.

WE commemorate to-day the greatest tragedy in this world's history.

“Holy Jesu, grant us tears,
Fill us with heart-searching fears,”

as we gaze on the sad pictures of the first Good Friday. It is past midnight, and we can just see a band of men coming forth from a green, tree-shadowed garden. Here and there a ray of moonlight, striking through the trees, flashes on bright armor, and we see that some of the band are Roman soldiers. The torches which are carried by many show the faces of bearded men, clad in Eastern dress. These are Jews, and their eyes are fixed fiercely and hungrily upon one, who, with his hands tied behind his back, and with bowed head, is dragged forward across the brook Kedron, and up the hill towards Jerusalem and the high priest's palace. In the background, among the shadows, I see some figures hovering; and I can recognize the grizzled locks of Peter, and the fair young face of the beloved disciple. There is one also in the crowd who hangs back, as though seeking an

opportunity to escape : he dare not meet the eye of the silent Prisoner, and his heart is torn with doubts, and hopes, and fears, as to the end of that terrible night's work, and the kiss of betrayal. We look anon, and see the sinless One in the presence of Annas the Sadducee, an old man, full of years, and of craft and cruelty. The city of Jerusalem is crowded in every part with visitors to the passover feast, but yet all is still.

The weary night, the darkest in this world's history, drags on. Jesus has been led away from Annas, who has in vain tried to find guilt in the innocent One. He has been taken from one side of the palace to the other, where dwells Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas. There a few of the most fierce and bitter of his enemies are met together, and seek, by the aid of false witnesses, to impute wickedness to Him in whom was no sin. To the questions, half sneering, half fearful, of Caiaphas, Jesus answers not a word. "As a sheep dumb before her shearer," so the Lamb of God opens not his mouth. But at last he speaks. He has told them that he is the Son of God, and now the savage hatred and terror of the crowd break forth. The mob sways to and fro, and grows every moment more numerous and more dangerous. Many a white-haired teacher, forgetting his sacred calling, is trying to inflame the passions of the people. There is one ominous murmur throughout the assembly : "He is guilty of death."

The dawn is breaking, and the spring morning is cold and gray, as they hurry Jesus across the court of the high priest's house. Those sad eyes, so wan with looking on

the sins of men, gaze on the groups of servants who stand around the fire of coals. Whose is that loud and eager voice? who is that whose broad Galilean dialect betrays his origin, as he cries with an oath, "I know not the man"? The sad eyes look on the face lighted up by the blazing coals, and strike sorrow to the very heart of denying Peter. And so with his wounded heart bearing this fresh wound, the denial of his friend, Jesus goes to the soldiers' guard-room, to await the day, when he may be judged by the whole Jewish council.

Oh, let us blindfold our eyes that we see not the insults of Him whom they have blindfolded! The brutal soldiery have their wicked will of him, till the sun shines out; and in the sweet Eastern morning, Jesus with bound arms and marred face is dragged before the Jewish council met in full assembly. Not one friendly face looks forth from that line of grim judges. Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, are absent; and scribe and elder, priest and Sadducee, are alike eager for the death of Jesus. And now the mock trial is over; and since they have not the power to put him to death, the Jews determine to take their victim to the Roman power; and so the procession starts, under the hot Eastern sun, for the gorgeous palace of Pilate the governor. The whole city of Jerusalem is astir. The streets are crowded with people,—villagers bringing their fruits and wares from Bethany and Bethphage; fishermen from Gennesareth, who have come to keep the feast; women and children guiding white-haired patriarchs; and ever and anon stern Roman soldiers riding with their officer, and watching warily for some riot among the people.

And now all eyes are turned for a moment on a strange procession. Yonder are the chief priests, with Caiaphas at their head, and others who are well known as the leading men of the great council. Strangers ask who is the pale, worn man, bound as a condemned prisoner, whose plain and homely clothes are torn and disordered, whose face is bruised and bleeding, and round whom a frantic mob surges with angry cries. "He is the prophet of Galilee," say some, "a good man and a wise;" "He is a deceiver, and stirrer-up of sedition," say others; and as the crowd presses nearer, the Roman soldiers beat the people back with their spears.

And so they come to the beautiful palace of Pontius Pilate, towering high up above the city, with its floors flashing with jewels, and its roofs glittering with gold, and its halls echoing with the splash of fountains and the cooing of doves.

Pilate sees in the excited crowd only a new sign of riot and rebellion in the people whom he fears and despises. He stands before the Jewish rulers, cold and dignified, without sympathy for accusers or accused. He sees that the priests are eager for blood, and he sees too plainly that the prisoner is innocent. He takes Jesus within the splendid hall, where his accusers will not come on the eve of the passover. The Roman governor stands there in his purple and fine linen, powerful, gorgeous, troubled. The King of heaven and earth stands there also, poor, despised, insulted, yet calm in the majesty of innocence. The few words then spoken convince Pilate that Jesus is legally innocent, and he tells the Jews so

plainly. In vain : the shouts grow more fierce, and are echoed by distant voices in the city. Presently Jesus is sent to Herod, Pilate hoping to get rid of the responsibility. Once more through its cruel streets, more crowded, more dangerous than ever, is the sinless One dragged to the palace of Herod Antipas, one of the worst of a bad line.

We may not dwell on the scene of mockery when Herod's soldiers set him at naught. Again Jesus is before Pilate, wearing a white robe, which Herod has caused to be put on him in mockery. Again the wavering Roman tries to deliver the innocent. But he fears an outbreak : the city is filled with Jews, far out-numbering his soldiers ; and already the cry is raised, "Thou art not Cæsar's friend." He offers as a last choice to set the prisoner free, according to the passover privilege of the Jews. But now a mighty roar goes up from numberless voices, "Not this man, but Barabbas ! Crucify him, crucify him !" And the terrible cry is taken up outside ; and far off among the crowded streets, are heard the words, "Crucify him, crucify him !"

And so the sentence is given, and Jesus is delivered to their will. Think of the savage fury of the mob as it sweeps upon him ! The soldiers rescue him, and proceed to scourge him, according to the horrible custom of the time. It was a punishment under which the victim often died, but for Jesus the end is not yet. The mockery of the soldiers follows the scourging. Herod's white robe, all stained with blood-drops now, is torn off, and a scarlet garment is thrown over the bound and wounded form.

Jesus has called himself the King of the Jews, and he shall be crowned, say the soldiers. One twists some sharp thorny branches into a crown, and presses it on the aching brow. Another has formed a sceptre from a reed, and has forced it between the bound and helpless hands ; and the mocking words are uttered, "Hail, King of the Jews !" If Pilate still hoped to save Jesus, the fury of the crowd soon banished the hope. He has yielded against his will, and knowledge of right ; he has washed his hands, as he thinks, of the blood of Jesus ; and soldiers have been sent to prepare a cross, — no difficult matter, as it was the usual instrument of execution among the Romans, — and the great procession of sacrifice sets forth for Calvary. The crowd sweeps out through the city gate to look on this great sight, — a motley crowd of secret friends and open enemies.

We know not for certain who was there, but I think we can rightly name some of that great multitude. There were many who had seen the works of mercy which Jesus had done. Country-people from Nazareth would remember the quiet home among the hills, and the blameless life of Him whom they called the "carpenter's son." Were there none there from Cana of Galilee, who remembered how the water was made wine? Were there none to tell of the daughter of Jairus, or the widow's son of Nain? I do not think that Lazarus and his sisters, from Bethany close at hand, would have been absent at such a time.

We know that there were women who followed him in that dread procession ; and doubtless the tearful eyes of

the Virgin Mother, she with the white hair and the faltering step, who leans upon the arm of St. John, saw how her Son fell fainting under the weight of the cross, and how Simon was forced to carry it. The spot is reached at last.

The authorities are determined to make the scene a notable one, and two thieves are to die with the Lord of righteousness. The Roman soldiers clear a space round the three crosses ; the great crowd stands eagerly outside the glittering barrier of armed men. The horrible details of the torture are watched with brutal interest. It is done at last : "they crucified him." How different the feelings of the two classes of spectators ! To the one class, this scene was only one of interest and excitement, in which their love for the horrible was satisfied. To the trembling believers in Jesus, to those who had learned to love him, and yet were afraid now to avow their love, the scene must have been one of mingled astonishment, mystery, and grief. Could it be that He, the all-powerful, would really yield to his enemies? Could the conqueror of death, the deliverer of Lazurus, really die? And who shall tell the thoughts which passed through the mind of the mother of Jesus, and of Mary Magdalene, and of many another who loved him? If the eyes of the Jewish rulers flashed with gratified rage, there must have been many eyes wet with tears.

See how the blood drops from that crushed right hand ! That hand lifted the little girl from her death-bed ; that hand stroked the sunny locks of little children in the old days of his loving ministry ; that hand supported thy sinking body, O weeping, penitent Peter !

See how the nails have torn those weary feet ! Remember thy precious ointment, O mourning woman ! thy gift was not wasted indeed : it is written in heaven against thy name, "She hath done what she could."

See how the precious blood of the paschal Lamb falls on the households of the world ! For thee, O Pilate, in thy pride, if thou wilt have it ; for thee, O Bartimæus the beggar, once blind, in thy humility, — for all alike it falls. " *They* crucified him ; " and *you* crucify him, all ye who sin of malicious wickedness.

" Is not his love, at issue still with sin,
 crucified
 Visibly when a wrong is done on earth ? "

O proud man, remember your pride crucifies afresh the meek and lowly Jesus ! O angry and cruel man, your hands drag Jesus again to Calvary ! O impure man and woman, your lust is as the foul spitting on the face of Jesus ! O selfish ones, your selfishness is a new cross for Jesus ; new thorns, new nails, for Jesus ! And you, careless daughters, frivolous, thoughtless, indifferent, you who wear a jewelled cross as a toy, you, by your carelessness and want of thought, make Jesus bear again the heavy cross of agony.

O blessed Jesus ! by thy cross and passion, give us strength so to mortify and kill all vices in us, that we may die with thee to-day unto sin, and rise with thee to better things on the bright Easter morning !

XLVII.

Easter Eve.

THE GARDEN GRAVE.

REV. H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, A.M.

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden ; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus. — JOHN xix. 41, 42.

A SEPULCHRE in a garden. A strange place, surely ; and a strange scene, which another of the Evangelists describes there. There was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. They had passed through all the agony of the last few terrible hours. The betrayal, the mockery, the crucifixion with its fearful accompaniments, were over ; and their excited, agonized feelings, strung up hitherto to the highest pitch, had now relaxed, and fallen to the lowest note of utter misery. They were watching in the garden by the grave of Jesus ; they were clinging, as so many thousands have done since that time, to the last relics of human nature ; not thinking of the living soul, but of the poor broken body which they had so recently embalmed with spices and with tears. It was no garden to the two Maries : it was doubtless a fair spot, bright with Easter blossoms, where “the fig-tree put forth her green figs, and the vine with the tender grape gave a good smell ;” but those two mourners saw nothing but a wilderness, and in that wil-

derness a rock wherein was a sepulchre, and all they cared for was hidden out of sight *there*.

What thoughts they must have had ! what doubts and fears ! for, remember, they understood few of the Master's words as yet. All the days must have recurred to them when they had walked with Jesus, and come back to paradise from which their mother Eve had fallen. The calm, quiet hours at Bethany ; that sermon which puts all other preachers to silence ; the words of comfort to the sick and sorrowing ; the dark homes made bright henceforth, — such memories must have come thronging upon the two Maries. They must have wondered, was it all in vain ? were his promises all misunderstood ? was He who raised Lazarus, and the little daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son, really dead, and buried in that sepulchre ? And so, no answer coming, their sorrow was very deep. They *could not see Jesus* : that was the reason. And so it is with us in our troubles : if *we* do not see Jesus, unless we know his voice and see his hand, the grave by which we watch seems sealed past all re-opening ; the sea of sorrow into which we have fallen seems like mid-ocean, unfathomable. Those mourners saw no flowers in the garden, because they could not see their Lord. So, too, with us : the world's fairest gifts fail to charm us. We cannot find the flowers in life's path, unless that path be one which we can tread along with our Redeemer. And the two Maries were mistaken in their sorrow, as we know : a better flower than any in that garden was buried in that sepulchre ; the Rose of Sharon, of the root of David, was there. Though their

minds misgave them, their womanly instinct made them hope (women are ever more hopeful than men, and men may thank God for it), and so they waited on ; and at last to a woman the risen Saviour revealed himself.

Both creations, the old and the new, took place in a garden. On the verge of the old world, and on the verge of the new, there was a garden ; and in each garden there was a grave. Notice the analogy between them. In the garden of Eden there was no death till sin entered in, and by sin came death ; so there was life there till the grave was digged by Adam's sin, the grave of all humanity. In the second garden, on the verge of the new creation, the world of the gospel, there were death and the grave already ; and *life* came when Jesus was laid there. In Eden we see the grave triumphant. "Thou shalt surely die," rang out as the first funeral knell of all creation. No matter how good, or brave, or young, or earnest : all, with one or two miraculous exceptions, went down into that grave first opened by fallen humanity in the garden. The faith of the patriarch, the heroism of the prophet, the piety of the Psalmist, could not reverse the sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return ;" and they went to their rest with no clear revelation to cheer them, though, thanks be to God, "all these died in faith." Now look at that other garden, and see the grave vanquished by the Lord of life ; see what is blazoned over the rocky sepulchre ; no longer "dust thou art," but "O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?"

And now let us gather a few flowers of teaching and of comfort from the garden grave. "Near the place where

our Lord was crucified, there was a garden." So with us: near to where *we* are crucified, where we bear the cross of trouble and anxiety and pain, which lies more or less heavily on all, there is a garden. Our home is our garden, our way of life is our garden; and we are always trying to plant it with flowers. We build our house, or we carve out our path in life, and work hard, and so late take rest, that we may enjoy ourselves, that we may comfort our bodies, and cherish our families, and say to our souls, "Thou hast much good laid up for many years: eat, drink, and be merry." We pull down our barns, and build greater; we lay in our wines, we purchase costly ornaments and furniture; we marry the wife of our choice,— what is all this but planting a garden wherein we may enjoy ourselves? It is for this that the scholar reads and stores up rare volumes; his library is his garden, the flowers of literature are *his* flowers. It is for this, the merchant schemes and plans new ventures; for this the digger toils in the gold-fields; for this the enthusiast dreams. Our thoughts, like those of foolish, feeble Ahab, are all set upon a garden. But in that garden, near to where He was crucified, there was a sepulchre; and so with us, every garden has its grave in it. We do not see it, we do not think of it. We plant the fairest flowers, we cultivate the choicest fruits; but what is a skull wreathed with roses more than a skull, and how is a grave less a grave because it is edged with blossoms? We all crave happiness, and our natural sense can see nothing but cloudless skies, thornless roses. And yet there is a grave in each one's garden, and we know it

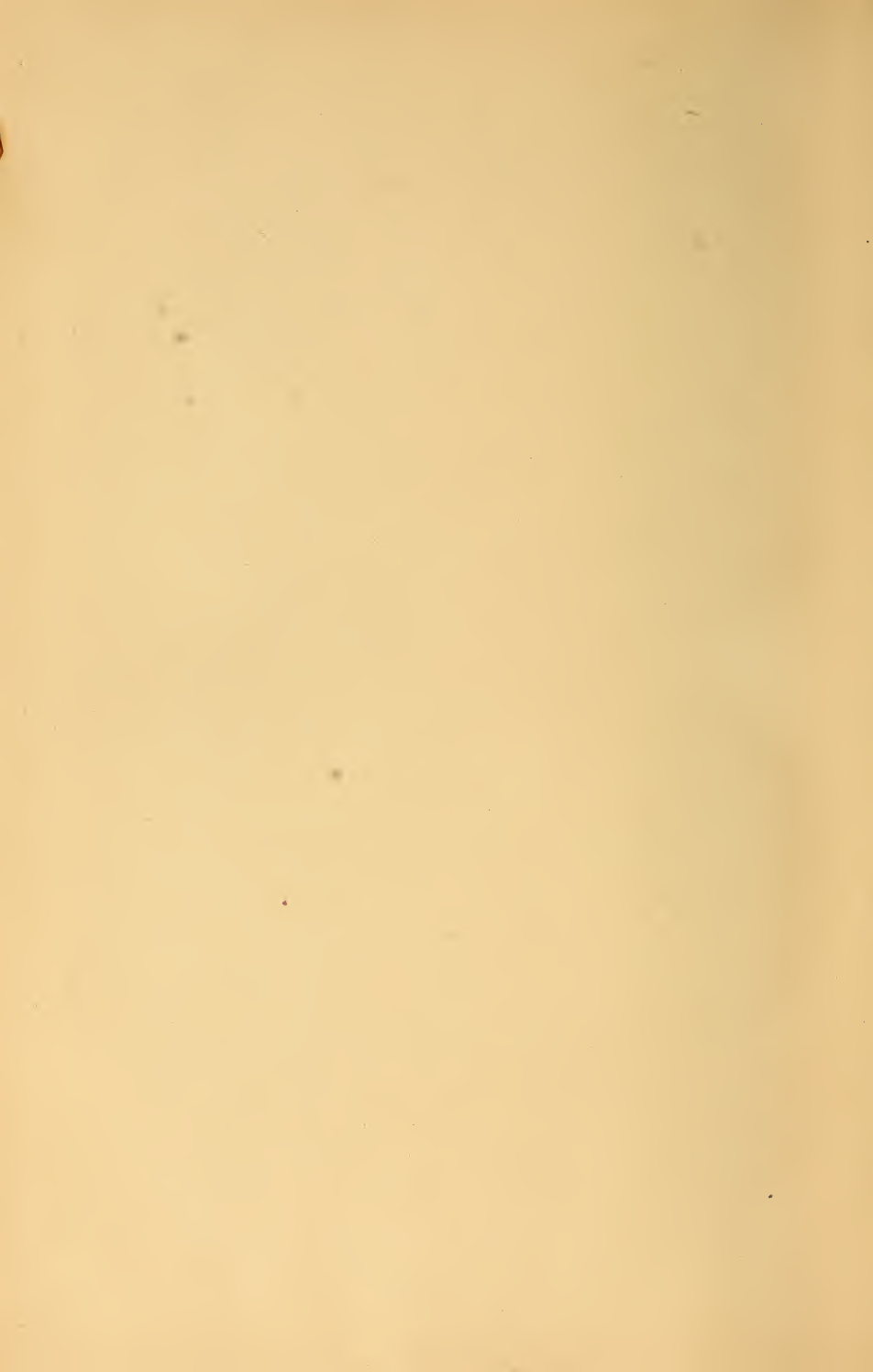
not ; nay, we can see the sepulchre among our *neighbors'* flowers, and yet never suspect our own. The blight of bankruptcy may have come next door, the grave of commercial ruin may come within ten feet of us ; but our answer, is "Tush, *I* shall never be moved." The frost of disappointment has killed my neighbor's roses ; the old sexton Time has dug a grave next door, and buried my neighbor's prosperity there ; the canker-worm of disease has eaten to the heart of his most cherished treasure, "his wee white rose of all the world : " but *my* conservatory is unblighted, *my* nursery is unscathed. We walk amongst our flowers, and see them growing up. There is our little child just budding ; there is our fair daughter, blossoming into womanhood ; there is our wife, like the fruitful vine upon the walls of our house. Do not talk to us of winter's snow, we are looking at spring and summer flowers ; do not talk to us of blight and canker-worm, there is no blight now upon our children's health ; do not talk to us of commercial failure, the money is growing and bearing fruit in our garden. And suddenly, as we wander along, we stumble upon a grave. It was there all along, and we did not know it. We planted our garden without a sepulchre, as we thought ; but the sepulchre was digged already, and our flowers concealed it. Then, when we have found it, all is changed. Travellers tell us that after a storm in the tropics, the garden so lately beautiful with blossoms is converted in a few hours to a waste of sand and ruin. So with us : no sooner does the sepulchre in our garden open, than we see nothing but a wilderness made by the tempest of affliction ; and we sit over

against the sepulchre as the women did, and cry, "'Tis all barren, all lost ! where are my flowers ? My daughter, herself the fairest flower, is cut off ; my peace of mind, which bloomed so tranquilly in the shade, is blighted forever. Oh the weariness of it ! Oh, wretched man that I am !" So we talk at first, as we sit over against the sepulchre. But by and by we find that Jesus Christ is buried in that sepulchre, and that he will come forth to comfort us ; and then all is changed, as it was for the Maries. We shall find far better flowers springing from that grave of sorrow than any which we planted : they withered, but these shall endure. Such flowers as peace, and hope, and faith, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost, — these are everlasting, these are *immortelles* ; and you always find them upon a grave. Let us have *these* flowers in our garden, my brethren ; and then we need not mourn as those without hope, if the other flowers of domestic joy, and comfort, and wealth, and honor, which we planted, wither away, or are plucked up by the roots. Only let us remember that there is a sepulchre in our garden, be it never so fair, never so carefully planted. It is useless for us to try to make our Eden here on earth, where the moth and rust doth corrupt, and where the blight of sin and sorrow must come. Be our road in life what it will, be our garden bare or beautiful, be our life's journey rough or smooth, all alike end in a grave ; and it is useless to shut our eyes to the fact. And there is nothing dreadful in the fact, after all : it is good for us that there is a sepulchre in our garden, and that our way of life ends there at last. Prosperity often spoils a man, sorrow

oftener regenerates him. A world all flowers would enervate us, unfit us for bearing and doing great things ; but every time we sit over against a sepulchre, and bury some favorite sin, some too enticing desire, some too fondly cherished hope, we learn true manliness, true resignation to the inevitable will of God ; we learn that noblest, hardest of lessons, "to keep silence, and know that it is God !" But, my brethren, that sepulchre in our garden of life must *have Christ in it*, or it will give us no comfort, no hope, no resurrection to better things. This is what the apostle means by "bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus." We are too apt to defer really deep thoughts about Christ, and his death for us, till our own death presses upon us ; but we are bidden to *live* daily unto Jesus, and to *die* daily unto sin, and to carry about the memory and the meaning of our Saviour's death into *all* the occupations of our life. Will you try to do this? Will you, at this most holy season, look carefully into your gardens, your money garden, your home garden, your pleasure garden, and re-model them? Will you lay them out in such a way that all your flowers in future may be planted round the sepulchre of Jesus? In plain words, will you strive henceforth to consecrate your way of life, yourselves, your souls, your bodies, your hopes, your wishes, your money, your joys, your sorrows, to the will of the risen Jesus? Will you strive to bury your angry passions, your pride, your jealousy, in the grave of Him who has conquered sin and death? In your daily life, when petty trials and vexations meet you, and annoy you, take them in prayer, and bury them in

the grave of Jesus ; when your best-loved friends are taken from you, and the shadow falls across your garden, and you see the sepulchre among the flowers, remember that those dear ones are safe, buried in the grave of Jesus. When your rebellious feelings rise within you, when your duty is thrust aside by your own selfish wishes, take them and bury them deep in the holy sepulchre, and seal the stone with the signet of earnest repentance. And at last, dear brethren, the Easter-tide will come to your garden ; the sepulchre will open, and your joy will be full, your best hopes more than realized, your greatest losses more than compensated for : since, if we have been buried with him, our Resurrection and our Life, we shall rise with him, — rise to that land where there is no sepulchre, and where all tears are wiped away forever.







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85



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